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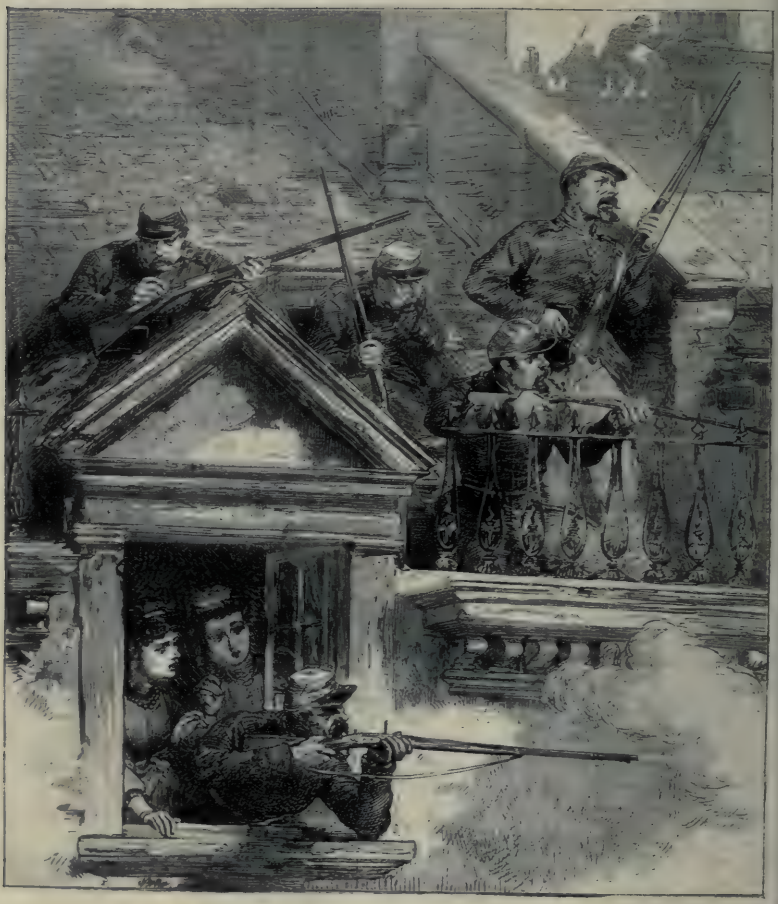
MY ADVENTURES IN THE COMMUNE



SOLDIERS FIRING ON INSURGENTS FROM THE HOUSETOPS.

[*Frontispiece.*

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MY ADVENTURES IN THE COMMUNE

PARIS, 1871

BY ERNEST ALFRED VIZETELLY

LE PETIT HOMME ROUGE

AUTHOR OF "THE COURT OF THE TUILERIES"
"MY DAYS OF ADVENTURE," ETC.

WITH TWENTY-FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS

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TO

MY SON-IN-LAW AND MY DAUGHTER,

HARRY AND VIOLETTE PITTS,

I AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATE

THIS ACCOUNT OF

THE GREATEST PARISIAN UPHEAVAL

SINCE THE FIRST FRENCH REVOLUTION

E. A. V.

"The children born of thee are sword and fire,
Red ruin and the breaking-up of laws."

PREFACE

At the end of my previous volume of reminiscences —"My Days of Adventure"—which dealt chiefly with the Franco-German War of 1870–71, I mentioned that I might perhaps be able to write a somewhat similar book on the war's aftermath, the great rebellion of the Commune of Paris. Several reviewers of "My Days of Adventure" expressed approval of that idea, and, fortified by their encouragement, I have endeavoured in the following pages to grapple with what has proved to be a by no means easy task. At the outset I have examined the causes of the rising of the Commune, and after recounting the circumstances under which it took place, I have passed in review the many men of various callings who undertook to rule Paris during the spring of 1871. Having thus marshalled my *dramatis personæ*, several of whom were personally known to me, I resume my narrative, and the reader will observe the comparatively mild measures which followed the establishment of the Communalist *régime*, and, then, the ever-increasing excesses which coincided with the Government's endeavours to regain possession of Paris.

Amidst a terrific bombardment and many encounters on the west and the south of the city, the Commune is seen casting priests, journalists and others into prison as hostages, raiding convents, turning churches into public clubs, demolishing the Vendôme Column and Thiers's private residence,

requisitioning money of the Bank of France and provisions of tradesfolk under threat of pillage, enrolling unwilling men in its forces, and erecting barricades all over the city so as to continue resisting the Government troops should the latter at last effect an entry. That is done, and a horrible week of bloodshed and incendiarism ensues. Finally, whilst the palaces and houses of Paris are blazing, the Communalists shoot the Archbishop and other hostages, and in their turn are often summarily despatched by the incensed soldiers.

The excesses of the insurgents cannot be excused, but I have also pointed out that, both before and during the rising, the Government presided over by Thiers, and the National Assembly which it represented, often blundered badly, and, by scorning all attempts at reconciliation, made the position much worse than it might have been.

There is more historical and less personal matter in this volume than in my previous one. I have aimed rather at giving my readers a general idea of the Commune's successive phases than at penning a complete account of my own varied experiences. In many instances, however, in which I do not mention myself, I supply facts based on personal observation. Now and again, some episode has lent itself to narrative of an autobiographical character, and I have then without compunction sounded a personal "note." I may add that in preparing my general narrative I have consulted a number of books, and many newspapers of the time.

Some readers, remembering my connexion with Émile Zola, may think, perhaps, that I have insisted somewhat unduly on the treatment which the Commune meted out to the clergy and the churches

of Paris. But although Zola warred against certain encroachments and certain dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church, he was no approver of wanton desecration, spoliation and murder; and I feel that if he had ever dealt with the subject of the Commune he would have written as severely as I, perhaps, have written, respecting all such matters.

The military side of my book may be of general interest at the present moment, for the siege conducted by MacMahon's army was a strenuous effort to take Paris by force of arms. At the time when my narrative was completed I in no wise anticipated an early outbreak of the great war which is now raging. For years, however, by pen and by speech, I have given expression to my opinions respecting the overweening ambition of Germany. Like others I felt that the present gigantic struggle would some day surely come. I have never been under any illusions respecting the alleged peaceful sentiments of the German Emperor; and, although I have felt sincerely grieved, I have not been at all surprised at the excesses and atrocities perpetrated by the German armies. When a man remembers what happened at Bazeilles, Châteaudun and many other localities in 1870, he cannot be astonished by any fiendishness on the part of Prussian, Bavarian, or any other German soldier. Those who have read "My Days of Adventure" will know that I there recounted many typical instances of German methods of warfare. Napoleon said that under a Russian one found a Cossack. I have always held that under a German one usually finds a savage. There is a famous proclamation of Wellington's, issued when he passed from Spain into France in 1814, and addressed to the people of the latter country. It might well be

contrasted with the orders issued by German commanders on invading a foreign state. They have no more feelings of humanity now than they ever had in the past. They have even retrograded since 1870.

The days have arrived, however, when the truculent and ferocious military caste of Germany must be taught a lesson which shall last for all time. Whatever fluctuations may have occurred during the early period of the present war, success, complete and overwhelming, will eventually crown the efforts of those who have been constrained to unsheathe the sword on behalf of human liberty and peaceful civilization. Over fields of slaughter, over ruined cities and desolate hamlets, there will rise a brighter sun than any of us has known—a sun heralding the dawn of a glad New Age:

> "For Freedom's battle once begun,
> Bequeathed by bleeding sire to son,
> Though baffled oft, is ever won!"

With respect to the illustrations which will be found in this volume, I have to tender my thanks to the proprietors of the *Illustrated London News* for their permission to reproduce several of the engravings which appeared in that journal during the period of the Commune. Some of these engravings were prepared from sketches made by myself. I have also to express my thanks to the Rev. R. Ussher, vicar of Westbury, Bucks, for placing several interesting contemporary photographs at my disposal. Like myself, Mr. Ussher was in Paris during the insurrection. In addition to the above-mentioned illustrations, I have been able to supply portraits of a good many of the men who figured in the rising.

E. A. V.

London,
September, 1914.

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MY ADVENTURES IN THE COMMUNE

I

INTRODUCTORY—ORIGIN OF THE RISING

The Corpses in the Rue des Rosiers—The Causes of the Commune—The Revolutionary Spirit of the Paris Working-Classes—Their fruitless Insurrections—Their Hostility to the Second Empire—The Emperor's Policy: Abundant Work and Good Wages—Paris Improvements—Rising Rents and Costlier Food—The Influence of the "International"—Distrust of the National Defence Government—Committees of Vigilance—Demonstrations and Risings during the German Siege—The Federation of the National Guard—Its Central Committee—The Elections after the War—Fears of a Monarchical Restoration—Distrust of Thiers—Demoralisation of the National Guards—Tippling Habits, Lack of Work, and Liability for Rent—Incitements of Revolutionary Leaders—Summary of the Causes of the Rising.

At a rather late hour on the evening of March 18, 1871, after climbing some of the hilly streets of Montmartre, where all seemed strangely quiet after the turmoil and excitement of the morning, I made my way round the two windmills which then stood on the summit of the height, until I reached a lane which was known as the Street of the Rose Trees. It was lined with gardens and little houses, few of the latter having more than a ground floor and an upper one, with perhaps an attic in its roof. In front of one of these cottages, as most might have been called, stood several people, chiefly old men and women, who were conversing in subdued tones. Others were either entering or leaving the house, which was faced by a paved yard and an iron gate.

This last was open, so, in my turn, I crossed the yard, went into the house, and reached the threshold of a bare room where a tall candle was burning on a box. On the floor beside it, lay two bodies, one that of an elderly man with a full white beard, and the other that of one who had been struck down in the prime of life, and who had a small moustache and imperial. I could see that the former wore civilian garb, and the latter the uniform of a brigadier-general; but the bodies were for the most part covered with a large and somewhat blood-stained sheet, which had been thrown over them in order, probably, to hide the traces of the shots with which these men had been despatched in the garden of the house, earlier in the day. At a low barred window, facing a passage which led from the yard to the garden, quite a number of children were struggling in order to obtain a view of the two bodies, which lay there unattended, unguarded, so that all who chose to do so could enter and gaze at them. They were the bodies of Generals Clément Thomas and Lecomte, the first victims of the Rebellion of the Commune.

As well as circumstances allowed, I made a little sketch of the scene and then withdrew. Some days later, however, I returned to the house with my father and my brother,* and it then being broad daylight we were able to make a full inspection of the tragic and historic spot. The house had formerly belonged to Eugène Scribe, the famous playwright, so expert in stage-craft, who wrote "Le Verre d'Eau," "Bertrand et Raton," and "L'Ours

* Henry and Arthur Vizetelly, repeatedly referred to in the former volume of my Reminiscences: "My Days of Adventure," Chatto & Windus, 1914.

et le Pacha," as well as the *libretti* of "Les Huguenots," "La Juive," "Le Prophète," and other celebrated operas. Scribe, indeed, had made the Rue des Rosiers his home before attaining to renown and fortune. But evil times had afterwards overtaken his little house, which had fallen into a very neglected state, and had become, during the German siege of Paris, the meeting-place of one of the Committees of the so-called Federation of the National Guard.

The tragedy of March 18 was doubtless largely responsible for the condition in which I found the garden. A quantity of trellis-work was broken, and the flower-beds had been trampled down. There were a few currant and gooseberry bushes, and a number of trees, the view between which extended far over the plain of Saint-Denis. On the other side, was a dead or dying peach tree, trained to a dark wall, upon approaching which several bullet marks became visible. It was, indeed, against that wall that the two generals had been shot.

"Why were they shot?" may be the inquiry of the reader who has but a hazy notion of the period with which I am dealing. Even those who are more fully informed may also be unable to account adequately for the rising of the Commune. I have indicated some of its causes in a previous book of mine "Republican France." Here I will briefly recapitulate them and adduce others; but in order to make things as clear as I can, it is advisable that I should go back farther, and say something respecting the long growth and expansion of revolutionary feeling in Paris.

Already in the time of Louis-Philippe, the workmen of the capital and other large French cities

awoke to a consciousness of the fact that the great Revolution, even the Reign of Terror, had only benefited the middle-class and the peasantry, and that they themselves had not even gained anything by helping to overthrow Charles X, for the middle-class had again chiefly profited by the outcome of the Glorious Days of July. The insurrections which marked the reign of Louis-Philippe sprang from the dissatisfaction of the working-classes at this state of affairs. Socialism, moreover, was at this period finding an increasing number of prophets and disciples in France. Louis-Philippe, however, was overthrown, and under the Second Republic universal suffrage at last gave the workers a voice in national affairs. Nevertheless, economic difficulties, and the reactionary tendency of the legislature, led to risings even under that *régime*. Yet though General Cavaignac crushed the insurrection of June, '48, he did not extinguish the revolutionary spirit.

The despotism of Napoleon's rule being forgotten, and only his glory remembered, his nephew Louis-Napoleon was at first undoubtedly favoured by many of the working-class; but when the Prince at last made his *coup d'état* the working-class, more than any other, endeavoured to withstand it. In a broad sense, it may be said that the workmen of Paris remained inimical to the Second Empire from its rise to its fall. Certainly very few opposition candidates were returned to the Corps Législatif at the earlier elections. But the working-classes of the capital then largely abstained from voting because there were few if any candidates to their liking. For several years, indeed, Republican politicians refused to be nominated because they knew that if they should be elected they would have to

take the oath of allegiance to the Emperor. Thus, the earlier elections of the Second Empire were no indication of working-class opinion in Paris.

On the other hand, Napoleon III strove to divert the attention of the workers from politics, and for a period, at all events, he largely succeeded in doing so. The rejuvenation of Paris was, of course, desirable for many reasons. Several important public improvements had been carried out in Louis-Philippe's time, under the ægis of M. de Rambuteau, then Prefect of the Seine, but a great deal of really necessary work remained to be done. In Baron Haussmann, who was appointed to the prefectship, the Emperor found a man who was as anxious as himself to improve and embellish the city. It was a stupendous task—one still pursued throughout the present Republic, which, indeed, has spent far more money on it than was expended by the Empire—but, quite apart from hygienic and similar considerations, and the desire to make Paris the most splendid city of Europe, there were political reasons which rendered the undertaking advisable. For instance, it would naturally give abundant employment to the working-classes, and one might fairly assume that men who were never at a loss for work, and who were always in receipt of good wages, would be less likely to become malcontents than if they were left to struggle under the conditions which prevailed when the Empire was restored.

My own recollections of Paris date back to 1865. The "Haussmannization" of the city had begun several years previously, but it was still progressing when I first arrived there, and I can recall several remarkable changes effected from that time until the Empire's fall. These changes, as I remarked

just now, have been multiplied under the Republic, and nowadays whenever I go to Paris I am constantly startled by some new development. I wonder how many English visitors to the city even remember, as they walk down the Avenue de l'Opéra, that, on its left side as one approaches the Palais-Royal and the Louvre, there used to be a hill called the Butte des Moulins after certain windmills which had once stood there, even as on the Butte Montmartre. Those mills had disappeared long before my time, and the Butte des Moulins as I knew it was a medley of little zig-zag streets, where several low-class lodging-houses were to be seen. However, the embellishers of Paris carved up the Butte, and carted it away, even, as somewhat earlier, they had cut up and carted away much of the Trocadero height, which I remember as a bleak and barren quarry—the first improvement there, a great flight of stone steps, dating from the Exhibition Year of 1867.

The changes effected in Paris during the Empire alone were enormous and innumerable, and, without doubt, a great deal of money was spent upon them. Although Baron Haussmann's hands remained perfectly clean, there was considerable corruption, bribery, jobbery, even sheer theft, in connection with several of his improvements, and the city of Paris being by no means so wealthy as it is now, the municipal budget was at last greatly affected by the outlay. Many people who were "expropriated" secured excessive compensation, many who purchased the cleared land for rebuilding purposes paid less for it than they ought to have done, contractors made much greater profits than was at all reasonable, and the losses fell upon the city's funds. It then became necessary to "slow down," and confine the

expenditure to the more urgent matters, this naturally leading to a shrinkage of employment. Now the improvements, whilst in full swing, had attracted to Paris, as to a promised land, thousands of workers from the provinces, the effect being that the working-class population of the city was nearly doubled by the influx of men connected with one and another branch of the building trade. On the other hand, the disappearance of so many mean streets and old houses virtually drove the working-class out of central Paris, so far as residence there was concerned, and compelled all the poorer people to seek homes in the various districts near the fortifications. As a result of it all, there was a rise in rents throughout the city. Further, the Imperial Government had effected a great change with respect to the area liable to municipal taxation. Before its advent the districts near the fortifications, such as Belleville, Montmartre, Montparnasse, and so forth, had been regarded as separate *communes*, outside the *octroi* stations—Paris proper then being limited to twelve arrondissements. When in 1860 the districts in question were annexed to the city for municipal purposes, and the *octroi* taxes were applied to them, the cost of living there naturally increased.

It follows from what I have said that in the last years of the Empire there was less work in the building and allied trades of Paris, whereas the cost both of rent and of food was in the ascendant. The Emperor must have known that discontent was brewing, and it was probably in order to check it that he granted certain rights and liberties during the final period of his reign. If, however, he hoped to disarm opposition by any such means, he was mistaken. The right of public meeting and the

more liberal press *régime* only tended to make the public discontent more manifest.

Moreover, the International Working-Class Association, with which Karl Marx was so prominently connected, had made a good many disciples in Paris. Germans flocked thither in great numbers during the Empire—it being officially estimated that no fewer than 188,000 were expelled from the city during the earlier stages of the Franco-German War—and among them there were certainly numerous socialists who disseminated their views. Several partisans of the International were prosecuted by the Government during the last months of the Empire. Nevertheless, I do not agree with those writers who have ascribed the rising of the Commune chiefly to the machinations of the International. The latter's influence was simply one among several factors. As I shall show presently, the rising was actually brought about by the Central Committee of the Federation of the National Guard, and only a very few members of that Central Committee were connected with the International. Further, the Association could not claim as adherents more than a dozen of the eighty-five men who subsequently became members of the Commune. I consider that the real spirit behind the rebellion was rather the old revolutionary spirit of 1793, often held in check, but never in reality extinguished, by any subsequent French Government.

I pass over the fall of the Empire, respecting which I have said so much in my two previous books, and come to the German Siege of Paris. The city then contained about 280,000 National Guards, distributed among 266 battalions. No sooner had the Revolution taken place than a spirit

of distrust sprang up in most of the battalions in which workmen predominated. These men doubted the Government of National Defence, in which they had not a single representative of their own class. Gambetta and Rochefort were virtually the only members in whom they placed any real reliance. At an early stage, then, Vigilance Committees of National Guards were appointed here and there, for the purpose of keeping a watch upon the Government and its proceedings. As the Empire had "sold" France to the Germans, surely it was quite possible that the National Defence might do something of the same kind, and that must at all costs be prevented. Influenced by the receipt of bad news, such as that of the fall of Strasbourg and Toul, the more revolutionary elements in the National Guard began to "demonstrate" before the siege of Paris had lasted a fortnight.* They asked, among other things, that there should be a *levée en masse*, that they should be armed with chassepot rifles, and that a Commune of Paris should be established.*

Now, during the Empire there had been no elected municipality in the city. The Prefect, the councillors, the district mayors, and their assessors were all appointed by the Government. The National Defence authorities readily recognized that the electorate had a right to be directly represented in municipal affairs, and it had already been arranged that the district mayors and their assessors should be chosen by vote. But the Government was by no means disposed to sanction the election of a supreme communal council and thereby revive the state of things which existed under the great

* See "My Days of Adventure," pp. 142, 143.

Revolution from August 10, 1792, until the fall of Robespierre in July two years later. During that period the so-called Commune of Paris had become the National Convention's rival for authority, had often destroyed those of its members to whom it objected, had weighed upon the Committee of Public Safety and its decisions, and had been mainly responsible for the inauguration of the Reign of Terror. If the National Defence authorities had allowed another Commune to be set up they would virtually have invited their own destruction. The new Commune, indeed, just like the old one, would soon have usurped either directly or indirectly the supreme direction of affairs, instead of confining itself to purely municipal business, and, that being known, all proposals to establish a Commune were rejected by Trochu and his colleagues.

But the revolutionary elements were pertinacious. They were led, for the most part, by ambitious and envious men, who found themselves without any official authority as the Government steadily refused to make room for them. To force on the election of a Commune of which they would be members became their set policy, for if that could only be achieved they would know how to undermine and supplant the so-called Men of the Fourth of September, who had taken over from the Empire the sweets and the bitterness of office. The blunders perpetrated by the National Defence in Paris helped to swell the ranks of the malcontents, and when the Hôtel-de-Ville was invaded on October 31, the triumph of the Communalist party seemed, for a moment, to be assured.* But the Government

* See "My Days of Adventure," p. 148, *et seq.*

was rescued, the rising quelled, and more than one leading agitator arrested and committed to prison.

The failure of the great Champigny sortie at the end of November intensified the bitterness with which Trochu and his colleagues were regarded by the more ardent and revolutionary National Guards. The latter accused the Government both of incompetence and of treachery, and demanded to be led against the Germans, as the regular army was evidently of no value. Finally, a number of battalions of Guards banded themselves together as a Federation, the declared object of which was to compel the Government to prosecute the military operations with the greatest possible vigour, whilst the secret object was to overthrow and supplant the powers of the day. This Federation appointed a Central Committee which first gave outward and visible sign of life on December 7, a week after the Champigny failure, when it placarded the walls of Paris with a red poster demanding the *mise en accusation*, otherwise the impeachment, of the whole Government.

It was undoubtedly the growing discontent and the frequent charges levelled against them that impelled the National Defence authorities to arrange for the great Buzenval sortie in which the National Guard was for the first time employed on a really large scale, 30,000 men belonging to it being sent to the front in conjunction with some 60,000 regulars and mobiles.* But the French were driven back with a loss of 4000 men, most of whom were precisely National Guards. Treachery then being imputed

* "My Days of Adventure," pp. 318, 319.

to the Government, there was another attempt to oust it from office and set up a "Commune" in its stead. On the night of January 21 (two days after the aforesaid sortie) several revolutionary leaders were forcibly released from the prison of Mazas, where they had been confined since the rising at the end of October; and on the morrow there was an ominous affray on the Place de l'Hôtel-de-Ville, where several people were killed and wounded. Again, however, the Government proved victorious, whereupon it made fresh arrests, closed the revolutionary clubs, and suppressed various extremist newspapers. However, its days were numbered, for in less than a week's time Paris capitulated.

By the terms of the capitulation the National Guards were allowed to retain their weapons. Jules Favre, who negotiated with Prince Bismarck, held that any attempt to disarm them would result in violent resistance and great bloodshed. It is a moot point whether such would have been the case. If the Germans had insisted on the disarmament of the Guards, and had refused to allow any provisions to enter the almost starving city until all weapons were surrendered, it is, to my thinking, probable that virtually everything would have been given up under the stress of hunger. But, of course, any such proceeding on the part of the Germans might well have been regarded as inhuman, as it would have subjected many thousands of women and children to intense suffering and hardship. At all events, Bismarck gave way to Favre, and the National Guards retained their arms. This did not actually cause the rising of the Commune, but it rendered it possible.

There can be no doubt that General Trochu's

military policy throughout the siege and the circumstances of the capitulation, rightly or wrongly angered and disgusted thousands of National Guards who were not, naturally, extremists in politics. At the close of the siege the Federation, of which I have already spoken, secured many new adherents. Its central committee, which met first of all at the so-called Tivoli-Vauxhall, and later on the Place de la Corderie, was composed of all sorts and conditions of men, whose numbers varied, at different stages, from thirty-five to forty. Among them I find were two who kept wine-shops, a house-painter, a cook, a door-porter, a lodging-house servant, a *restaurateur*, an acrobat and sword-swallower, an ex-advocate, an ex-zouave, a bookbinder, a concert manager, two inevitable journalists, a wardrobe dealer of the Temple market, a government and a bank clerk (who had been convicted of theft), a former seminarist, a man who had worked in a wash-house, another who had kept some public baths, and a couple of sculptors' assistants. The others were mostly nondescripts, who had resorted to divers odd ways of making a living.

The National Assembly elections which speedily followed the capitulation of Paris were not of good omen for a continuance of Republican rule. Thiers was elected in twenty-six and Gambetta in nine departments, and Paris, besides choosing such celebrities as Victor Hugo, Louis Blanc, and Edgar Quinet, returned a number of extreme Republicans who came very much to the front during the ensuing Commune. Of France, generally, however, it may be said that the electors voted chiefly for candidates belonging to one or another of the two royalist parties—the Legitimists and the Orleanists; only

five acknowledged partisans of the fallen Empire securing election. The Parisian masses who wished to retain the Republican form of rule, were alarmed by the results of the polls, which they interpreted as signifying that an attempt would speedily be made to restore a monarchy in France. This was another circumstance which attracted many men to the Federation of the National Guard. During the next month or two Thiers, who had been chosen by the Assembly as Chief of the Executive Power, certainly made more than one declaration upholding the Republican *régime;* but although, as we know, he was quite sincere in all that he said, he was greatly distrusted by the Parisian working-classes. This was not surprising, for he had served Louis-Philippe as a Minister of State, had remained a friend of the Orleans Princes, and had even, at one period of his career, coquetted with Louis-Napoleon. Thus the working-class elements of Paris placed no reliance on what Thiers said. It was remembered, moreover, that the fallen Emperor, when elected President of the Republic at the end of 1848, had solemnly sworn to uphold that form of Government, but had nevertheless summarily throttled it one dark night three years afterwards. Thiers's statements were considered akin to Napoleon III's oath; and this distrust was also one of the many causes which helped to bring about the Commune.

Further, the masses were more or less demoralized. They had secured very little to eat during the siege of Paris, but there had always been an abundance, even a superfluity, of liquor—enough wines and spirits remaining at the capitulation to have sufficed the city for another year, in spite of all that had been consumed to compensate for the deficiency of

food throughout the dark months of the late siege. During that period the Parisian *ouvrier* had largely become a tippler, and this circumstance also was a contributory cause of the Commune.

Next, the workman, unless he had been employed during the siege in one of the Government's military factories, had largely lost the habit of regular work; and, moreover, when the siege ended there was at first no work at all to be obtained. The cash resources of employers were very slender, and the financial condition of France rendered credit a difficult matter. I know that before the Commune began several artificial-flower and *passementerie* makers in Paris were able to start afresh and engage a considerable number of women and girls; but that only provided for a small part of the necessities of the time, and the great bulk of the men remained utterly unemployed—in such wise that the Government had to continue paying them their daily stipend of one franc fifty centimes as National Guards, as otherwise they would have starved.

Yet another circumstance must be mentioned. The National Defence authorities had decreed that the payment of rent should remain in abeyance during the siege, but the landlords were now raising their voices and agitating for payment, which, the poorer folk imagined, would soon be ordered by the new reactionary National Assembly. This matter disturbed the minds of well-nigh every inhabitant in the working-class districts of Paris, and it was also one of the causes which conduced to the Commune.

Moreover, there was the continual incitement of the revolutionary leaders and of the newspapers which they inspired. These men, as we have seen,

had already made more than one attempt to secure power, and although they had been repeatedly baffled they had by no means renounced their ambition. Indeed, circumstances seemed to them to have become more favourable to their designs, owing to the general disgust at the capitulation, and the growing distrust of the new legislature and the men whom it had appointed to office.

I shall presently relate the exact circumstances under which the Communal rising was brought about. The reader will have already perceived that it was the outcome of a long succession of incidents and of the impression which those incidents had created on popular imagination. Before going farther, it is perhaps advisable for me to recapitulate very briefly, what I consider to have been the chief causes of the Commune :—

I. The survival of a revolutionary spirit among the working-classes from the great Revolution onward.

II. The attraction of thousands of workmen to Paris during the Second Empire whilst the city improvements were in progress ; and the discontent which ensued as the amount of available work diminished, and the cost of living increased.

III. The spread of Socialism and the influence exerted by members of the International Association of Workers.

IV. The circumstances under which Paris was defended from the Germans ; the repeated failure of the sorties, and the alleged treachery of Trochu and other generals, which was so widely believed in. Briefly, the profound dissatisfaction respecting both the capitulation of the city and the terms of peace generally.

V. The retention by the National Guards of their weapons after the capitulation.

VI. The fact that the National Assembly, elected at the close of the war, was chiefly composed of monarchists, that a monarchical restoration was feared, and that Thiers's assurances in favour of the Republic were disbelieved.

VII. The demoralization of the masses during the German siege, when food was so scarce, and tippling became more and more general.

VIII. The lack of employment at the end of the siege and therefore the enforced prolongation of idle habits.

IX. The fear that all arrears of rent would become payable; and indirectly the trouble, in many cases even ruin, caused among petty traders by a special law on the payment of bills of exchange. This I shall explain hereafter.

X. The constant incitements of revolutionary leaders, some of whom were influenced by genuine if crazy patriotism, whilst others were mere self-seekers, ambitious to secure some degree of power.

XI. The immediate cause of the Commune, however, was the Government's demand that the Federation of the National Guard should surrender the ordnance which it had for the most part appropriated without authority, and which, some said, was to be handed over to the Germans in accordance with the provisions of the capitulation of Paris.

It was this last point which brought matters to a crisis, and in my next chapter I hope to show what ordnance it was that the National Guards withheld from the authorities, how they had become

possessed of it, and how, on the Government attempting to seize it by force, insurrection supervened and Paris was abandoned to Communalist rule which only ceased eleven weeks afterwards in the midst of bloodshed and incendiarism.

II

THE GATHERING STORM—THE RISING OF MARCH 18

The English Gifts to the Parisians—Unpopular Generals—Demonstrations on the Place de la Bastille—The Drowning of Vicensini—The Guns and the National Guard—The Committees and Federation of the Guard—Raoul du Bisson—D'Aurelle de Paladines—The Disarming and Disbanding of the Guards—Newspapers suppressed—General Duval and General Henry—Blanqui and Flourens—The Assembly at Versailles—The foolish "Loi des Echéances"—The Guards and their Armament—The Troops in Paris—The attempt to remove the Guns—Fraternization of Soldiers and Guards—General Paturel's Misadventure—Affray on the Place Pigalle—General Lecomte arrested—Captain Beugnot's Narrative—The Prisoners at the Château Rouge—The Rue des Rosiers—Arrest of General Clément Thomas—The Shooting of Thomas and Lecomte—The other Prisoners released—The Position of M. Clemenceau—The Seizure of Paris by the Communalists—General-in-Chief Charles Lullier—The Flight of the Government.

ONE of the first interesting sights which I witnessed on returning to Paris with my father and my brother Arthur, at the close of the German siege, was the distribution of the provisions which were sent from England, a highly successful Lord Mayor's Fund having been established in London in order to relieve the necessities of the famished Parisians. In the central part of the city the distributions took place at the agency of Messrs. Copestake, Moore & Co., on the Place des Victoires, where the queues of emaciated, anxious, waiting people were interminable. In this district everything was conducted in a methodical and highly satisfactory manner; but more than once I heard of grumbling in other parts

of Paris where the distributions were left to the local municipal authorities, it being asserted there that some folk were unduly favoured, and that others, who were really in more necessitous circumstances, received very inadequate shares of the British gifts. In that respect the responsibility rested entirely with the municipalities, and, although there were certainly some regrettable instances of favouritism and neglect, the general impression was excellent.

Paris remained, however, in a very restless state. There was discontent and disgust respecting both the capitulation and the terms of peace; and anxiety respecting the intentions of the newly elected National Assembly. Moreover, General Vinoy, who in the last days of the German siege, had succeeded Trochu as Military Governor of Paris, was extremely unpopular among the more Radical battalions of the National Guard. Their immediate commander during the latter part of the siege had been General Clément Thomas, an old and tried Republican, who two or three days after the capitulation threw up his post rather than serve under such an averred Bonapartist as Vinoy. Thomas himself, however, was unpopular with many of the "Red" battalions on account of his repeated attempts to ensure discipline among them in the siege-days.

It may be said that during the period which elapsed between the capitulation (January 28) and the entry of the Germans into Paris (March 1) indiscipline was rampant among the citizen soldiery, who behaved virtually as they listed. There can be no doubt that many of them, judging by the provincial elections for the National Assembly, deemed

the Republic to be in peril, and the installation of a sovereign imminent. Thus, when the anniversary of the proclamation of the Second Republic (February 24, 1848) came round, a series of demonstrations began on the Place de la Bastille, whither several battalions of Guards repaired in order to take on that historic spot a solemn oath to uphold the Republican form of government. Most of the demonstrators, however, demanded that the Republic should be of the "Red" variety, and one of them, after climbing the column which commemorates the Revolution of July, 1830, succeeded in placing a red flag in the hand of the winged and gilded figure of Liberty by which the column is surmounted. This exploit was followed by uproarious applause, but it was by no means to the liking of some of the Breton sailors who had done duty in the forts round Paris during the siege, and, a day or two later, when three of these seamen ascended the column, one of them took down the red flag and replaced it by a tricolour. There were many National Guards assembled on the square when this took place, and their fury became uncontrollable. The three venturesome and unarmed sailors were at once threatened with death, and the one who had removed the red flag was constrained to replace it, his tricolour being afterwards torn to shreds.

The incident clearly indicated the tendencies of the demonstrators, and although no shots were exchanged several violent scenes ensued between the National Guards and the parties of seamen who, during the next few days, repaired to the Place de la Bastille to protest against the red flag. I witnessed one or two angry encounters which seemed likely to end in bloodshed, but the Government prevented it

by sending the sailors to their respective ports.* The "Reds," however, were undoubtedly hungering for a victim, and they found one in an unfortunate Corsican detective named Vicensini, who was seen taking notes at one of the daily demonstrations. A huge crowd was then assembled on the Place de la Bastille and in its vicinity. In vain did the unlucky police-agent endeavour to escape. He was caught on the Quai Henri IV., and amidst loud shouts of "À l'eau ! à l'eau !" his legs and arms were bound, he was carried to a barge, and thrown from it into the Seine. Every time that his body rose to the surface, as it drifted towards the Ile Saint-Louis, it was fiendishly pelted with stones, whilst a great gaping mob of men, women, and children gazed on the horrid scene from the parapets of the quay. The sight reminded my father and myself how we had narrowly escaped a similar fate at Laval a few weeks previously.†

March 1, the day fixed for the entry of the Germans,‡ was now at hand. Some violent enthusiasts of the National Guard wished to oppose that entry, that "desecration of the sacred ground of Paris," at all risks, but more prudent views prevailed among the various committees by which the Guard was controlled, and it was decided merely to picket the area to which, by the arrangements between the respective Governments, the German occupation was to be limited. Near the Place de la Concorde the

* The Normans and Bretons were sent off on March 8 and 9, and the men belonging to Toulon on March 15. The Government could have relied on the fidelity of these seamen had they remained in Paris, and their services might have proved valuable at the rising which took place on March 18.

† See "My Days of Adventure," p. 306, *et seq.*

‡ Described in "My Days of Adventure" and "Republican France."

French lines were kept by Gendarmes, but elsewhere, I believe, National Guards were on duty. On the very eve of the German occupation, however, it was discovered that a quantity of French ordnance had remained at Neuilly and on the Place Wagram, which were within the area assigned to the Germans, and it being surmised that the Government intended to transfer these guns to the enemy, it was resolved that such a dastardly piece of treason should be prevented.

Here I must open a parenthesis. There is no more vexed question than that of the guns, the seizure of which by the more disaffected National Guards led to the Rising of March 18. Some writers will be found stating that these guns actually formed part of the National Guards' armament, and not to that of the regular army. It is claimed that they were exempt from the conditions of the capitulation of Paris, and that the Government had no right to hand them over to the Germans. It is certain that in regard to the armament of Paris the convention signed by Bismarck and Jules Favre was very loosely worded. It specified that the forts and ramparts of Paris should be disarmed and that the *gun carriages* on the ramparts should be surrendered. Clause 7, however, included this provision: "The National Guard shall retain its weapons (*armes*) and be charged with the guard of Paris and the maintenance of order (!)."

Undoubtedly, the marching battalions of the National Guard were provided during the siege with mitrailleuses, and in some cases had field batteries with them. It will be remembered, too, that a very large number of cannon were then cast in Paris, the cost of many of them being defrayed by public

subscription. Thus, a sentimental kind of interest attached to these guns, to which, it was claimed, the Germans could have no right at all. I have been unable to find, however, that the latter demanded the surrender of any but the regular artillery.* When the Government decided to secure possession of the guns detained by the disaffected National Guard it issued a proclamation signed by Thiers and all the members of his administration, stating that "the cannon purloined from the State are about to be replaced in the arsenals." Not a word was said respecting their surrender to the Germans, though, rightly or wrongly, the impression prevailed that such was the Government's intention.

Let us now revert, however, to the eve of the German entry into Paris. The cannon on the Place Wagram and at Neuilly were dragged to Montmartre. Others, on the fortifications there and at Belleville, were likewise seized, the result of these operations being that about a hundred field and siege guns, a dozen mitrailleuses, and half a dozen howitzers were placed in the keeping of revolutionary battalions of the National Guard.† A further *coup* followed during the brief occupation of the Champs Elysées district by the Germans, some twenty-six guns being removed from the Gobelins tapestry manufactory, recently used as a military store-place, and whence a number of chassepot rifles and a large stock of cartridges were also abstracted, the whole being transferred, in the first instance, to the unoccupied schools of the Christian Brothers in the Maison

* It is generally held that some 1500 fortress guns and 400 field pieces were handed over at the capitulation.

† It has been claimed by partisans of the Commune that Vinoy signed an order for the guns on the Place Wagram to be delivered to the Guards; but this statement lacks corroboration.

Blanche district, and there jealously watched by National Guards.

The latter were at this time under the control of various committees, which were in a measure jealous of each other's authority. For instance, there was the original Central Committee of the Twenty Arrondissements of Paris, the Central Federal Republican Committee, the Central Committee of the Defenders of the Republic, and the Central Committee of Montmartre. On March 1, the very day when the Germans entered Paris, the first-named body issued a proclamation claiming that by its attitude it had made "the Prussian occupation humiliating for the conqueror," and calling upon all the National Guards to rally round it. Among the five-and-twenty signatures appended to this factum were those of Arnold, Bergeret, Chauvière, Courty, Lavalette, Pindy, and Varlin, who afterwards figured among the members or chief officials of the Commune. Negotiations were pending, however, between this Committee and that of the "Federal Republicans," and on March 3, when the Germans evacuated Paris, these two bodies were amalgamated, and statutes were drawn up for the whole "Federation of the National Guard."

The preamble set forth, first, that the Republican form of government was the only possible one, and could not be called in question; and, secondly, that the National Guard alone had the right to choose and appoint its officers and to dismiss them if they should forfeit its confidence. The organization was to consist of battalion-committees and a central committee, the latter to include two delegates for each arrondissement of Paris. One of these delegates was to be elected, irrespective of his rank, by the

council of each legion (two battalions), and the other was to be the commander of a battalion chosen by his pairs. The duties of the Central Committee were to watch over the armament, prevent any attempt to overthrow the Republic, and to reorganize "the national forces." Its expenses were to be met by a subscription of "at least five francs per month" from each company of the National Guard.

The first president of the new organisation was a certain Raoul du Bisson, who called himself, and may have been, a Count. There have been men of title in every French revolution or insurrection. Born at Caen in Normandy, Du Bisson was about sixty years of age in 1871. Whatever his exact origin may have been, he had evinced aristocratic and Legitimist tendencies throughout his career. He had fought for the Carlists in Spain, and had been imprisoned as a Carlist conspirator. Next, he had figured as a French Royalist, had conspired against Napoleon III, and thereby incurred a second sentence of imprisonment, after serving which he had placed his sword at the disposal of Ferdinand II, the odious "King Bomba" of Naples. One of his last exploits had been to promote an expedition to Abyssinia, it being his desire to make himself *hedjaz* of that country. He had been president of the "Federal Republicans" before that body was amalgamated with the adherents of the original Central Committee, and he was married to a sister of one of the latter's members—Lavalette, an ex-advocate, who had gone into the cloth trade, and who, however advanced his opinions might be, was at least a courageous and an honest man. I may add that although Du Bisson was elected president of the

new Federation,* he exercised little more than nominal authority over it, and speedily found his position undermined.

Wishing to bring the National Guard back to a sense of discipline, the Government appointed General d'Aurelle de Paladines to be its commander-in-chief. He was known to be a disciplinarian, but it was supposed, perhaps, that he would be a popular commander, as during the war he had gained the battle of Coulmiers over the Bavarians under Von der Tann.† But he had also lost the battle of Orleans, and had then been dismissed from his command by Gambetta. Moreover, he had a past which was immediately disclosed. The Franco-American adventurer Cluseret, who had gained the rank of brigadier-general during the Civil War in the United States, and who was very popular and influential among the Parisian extremists, issued an open letter declaring that no honest man could possibly serve under such a commander as D'Aurelle. Among the papers found at the Tuileries after the fall of the Empire there was, it seems, a petition addressed by D'Aurelle to Napoleon soon after the Coup d'Etat, in which he solicited that his services on that occasion (he was then a Colonel of Zouaves) might be rewarded by appointment to a Senatorship. This was enough to ruin any man in the eyes of Parisian Republicans, and as the letter had been made public during the siege, and must have been known to Le Flô, Thiers's War Minister, it is rather surprising that D'Aurelle should have been appointed to the command of the National Guards.

* It claimed to have the support of 215 battalions of the National Guard.

† See "My Days of Adventure."

They regarded him as an enemy of the Republic and feared that he would attempt to disarm and disband them. If they should be disarmed the foes of the Republic might well overthrow it, and if they should be disbanded how would they be able to live? As I pointed out previously, little or no work was at this time obtainable in Paris, and the bulk of the Guards relied for subsistence on their daily pittance of one franc fifty centimes. In the eyes of many men their pay was even the more important question of the two, and the prevailing poverty of the working-classes was undoubtedly one of the causes of the Commune.* Soon after D'Aurelle's appointment he was visited by a deputation of several officers of the National Guard, including those commanding the ramparts in the districts of Belleville, Ménilmontant, and Charonne. He declared to them that he had no intention whatever of disbanding the Guard, and added that he was devoted to the Republic, which he held to be "the only honest government which could extricate the country from its impossible position." Very little credit was attached to his assurances, however, and although he remained nominally in command his orders were often flagrantly disobeyed, the chief control of the Guard remaining in the hands of the Committees.

Thus affairs went from bad to worse, the relations between the regular authorities and the Guards becoming more and more strained every day. The position was envenomed by a variety of occurrences. The language used by the extremist journals being of the greatest violence, there was justification for

* The Committees of the Guard decided that all attempts at disarmament and disbandment should be resisted by force.

General Vinoy's action when, by virtue of his powers as Governor of Paris, he decreed the suppression of *Le Cri du Peuple*, *Le Mot d'Ordre*, *Le Vengeur*, *Le Père Duchesne*, *La Bouche de Fer*, and *La Caricature*, edited respectively by Jules Vallès, Henri Rochefort, Félix Pyat, Vermesch, Paschal Grousset, and Pilotell, the last-named of whom had repeatedly threatened all adversaries with the guillotine. On the other hand, of course, this measure infuriated the " Red " Battalions of the Guard.

Two of the latter's officers had already assumed the rank of General without authority, and required their pretensions to be taken seriously—one in the 13th and the other in the 14th arrondissement of Paris, where they set everybody else at defiance. These men were named Duval and Henry. The former, a Norman, born in the department of the Manche in 1841, had become an ironfounder in Paris, where in 1867 he was affiliated to the famous International Association, which he afterwards left, but joined once more early in 1870, when, with several other members, he was tried at Blois and sentenced to two months' imprisonment, the Association having been declared illegal in France. In the early part of the Franco-German War Duval earned a living by selling slippers, whilst his wife, a good-looking little woman (who in the later days of the Commune went about carrying a revolver, and wearing a broad red sash) was employed in making shirts. During the siege of Paris, however, Duval, who had little education, but was fairly intelligent, became an officer in the National Guard, and tried to advance the interests of the International.* I

* Apropos of the International, it may be mentioned that during the interval between the siege and the Commune attempts were made in

shall have to speak of him again in subsequent chapters of this volume.

His colleague, the self-improvised General Henry, was one of four brothers, all of whom served the Commune, one of them being, I believe, father of young Émile Henry, the Anarchist, who in after years was guillotined for his participation in the Anarchist Terror * which culminated in the assassination of President Carnot. "General" Henry, for his part, had been a "super" at the little Théâtre de Montrouge beyond the Quartier Latin, and subsequently a lithographic draughtsman. At the time of the Commune, he was about thirty years of age, short, thick-set, with a ruddy face and tawny hair. We shall meet him again after his appointment as "Chief of the General Staff" of the Commune's army. At the date I have reached he was a member of the Central Committee.

Now General Vinoy wished to arrest both him and Duval, but a certain General Valentin, who had lately succeeded M. Cresson as Prefect of Police, apprehended that this might lead to a popular explosion, and so the idea was abandoned. The decision was, perhaps, a wise one, for not only had great irritation been caused by the suppression of the extremist journals, but still greater ill-feeling had been promoted by the sentences of death passed, by default, on two such prominent Revolutionaries as Auguste Blanqui and Gustave Flourens. Those two firebrands were for the moment in hiding,

Paris to start a newspaper in its interest, Varlin, one of its members, endeavouring to influence the Central Committee to that effect. But the proposal was negatived. At the Paris Elections for the National Assembly the partisans of the International polled very few votes indeed.

* He was responsible for the explosions at the Café Terminus and the Police-station in the Rue des Bons Enfants.

but they launched vehement protests against their sentences, which, indeed, one could hardly uphold from a strictly legal standpoint. Their offence, indeed, was that of attempting to overthrow the Government of National Defence at the rising of October 31, 1870, during the German Siege; but it was pointed out that the Government in question had at the moment no real legal status, being simply the offspring of a successful insurrection. In fact, its powers were not confirmed by a plebiscitum in Paris until three days after the affair in which both Blanqui and Flourens figured so prominently. Moreover, so many unfulfilled promises were made at the time, that it would have been far better had a sponge been passed over the whole business—as might have happened, if the rancour of General Trochu at having been detained for some hours as a prisoner at the Hôtel-de-Ville, had not constrained the authorities to take belated proceedings.

As we have seen, there were already numerous reasons for discontent among the Parisian working-classes. Yet another one was the resolve of the newly elected Assembly to install itself at Versailles instead of in the capital. The latter being in such a restless state, some timid deputies wished to venture no nearer to it than Tours, Blois, or Orleans; but, although Thiers himself advocated Fontainebleau, a large majority approved of the selection of Versailles. That was hardly a name of good omen for Parisian Republicans, for Versailles had been the seat of the absolute monarchy, which, it was imagined, the new Assembly intended to restore. There was, however, perhaps some consolation in the thought of a certain famous march to Versailles, when Monsieur and Madame Véto had been brought to Paris and

lodged, as in a gilded prison, at the Tuileries. I remember that subsequent to the Commune, M. Vautrain, who became President of the Paris Municipal Council, declared that there would have been no insurrection if the Assembly had installed itself in the capital. He argued that its distrust of the Parisian masses had confirmed the latter in their idea that the overthrow of the Republic was intended. On the other hand, there was assuredly justification for the course taken by the Assembly, for its deliberations would scarcely have been free had it been surrounded by the bayonets of from one to two hundred thousand malcontents.

But it was far less its choice of meeting-place than its actions which set the Parisian masses against the Assembly. Now that the preliminaries of peace with Germany were ratified many matters attaching to everyday life had to be adjusted. There was the rent question, to which I previously referred,* and, further, there was that of the payment of all the promissory notes and acceptances which had remained in abeyance since an early date in the Franco-German War. In those days (indeed, it is the same now) an immense amount of business was transacted by means of notes and acceptances, often for very small amounts indeed. Never, I think, has there been anything like it in Great Britain. Among us, bills are almost invariably made payable at banks, and are drawn for amounts considerably in excess of those which are so often current in France. In Paris the great majority are payable at the offices, shops, or private residences of the payees, and thus the *garçons de recette* of the Bank of France and other great financial institutions go about

* See pp. 15, 17, *ante*.

collecting payment, and, as we know, are sometimes pounced upon and murdered by so-called Apaches. The many payments which these messengers may have to collect in one day will range from as little as twenty francs to many thousands. At the time I write of, the small tradespeople who carried on business by means of bills were innumerable.

Now, the Legislature had to come to a decision respecting the payment of all the "paper" which, by virtue of Government decrees, had remained unpaid since August 13, 1870. The proposals put before the Assembly alarmed the National Union of Commerce and Industry, which, in conjunction with seventy Chambers of Commerce, made representations concerning them. However, the Assembly in its wisdom, or rather its folly, would not listen to remonstrances. It edicted that all bills which had matured between August 13 and November 12, 1870, should be payable with interest exactly seven months after the original date of maturity. Bills which had matured from November 13, 1870, to April 13, 1871, were to be payable, also with interest, from June 13 to July 13, 1871.

The effect of the first stipulation was disastrous. Allowing for the seven months' delay, the bills which had matured on August 13, 1870, had to be met on March 13. The law itself was only voted on the 10th, and promulgated on the very day fixed for payment. After emerging from the dreadful period of the siege, with business yet at a standstill, few, if any, small tradespeople and such like in Paris were ready to discharge their liabilities. The result was that in the course of four days *one hundred and fifty thousand bills were protested*, and many people were ruined!

I included that affair, that foolish blunder, among the indirect causes of the Rising of the Commune, but it would perhaps be more accurate to say that it was one of the principal reasons why the rising succeeded. People have often said: "There were 280,000 National Guards in Paris. Of these about 180,000 joined the Commune. Why did not the other 100,000—or at least some of them—at once offer resistance to the movement?" As we shall see presently, several battalions certainly remained loyal, but when the rising took place there was absolutely no enthusiasm left for the Government. Thousands of tradesmen, manufacturers on a small scale, and so forth, folded their arms, and merely looked on whilst the extremists seized the city. Five or six days previously their signatures had been dishonoured, and they saw, perhaps, bankruptcy awaiting them owing to the folly of the Government and the Assembly with respect to the so-called "Loi des Échéances." A month later, that law was amended with respect to bills maturing at subsequent dates, but irretrievable harm had been done already and the Commune was in possession of Paris.

In addition to the guns which the malcontent National Guards removed from the Place Wagram, the Gobelins, and Neuilly, they secured quite a number of others, as well as many rifles and muskets and much ammunition, during the earlier days of March. The figures given by Jules Claretie in his "Histoire de la Révolution de 1870–1871," are, however, somewhat inaccurate. In various instances he has counted the same guns twice over, as a number of them were for greater safety removed by their captors from place to place. For instance, the troops

seized several guns on the Place des Vosges (the old Place Royale) and the National Guards thereupon dragged the remainder to Belleville and the Buttes Chaumont.

It may be taken that altogether the National Guards possessed themselves of some two hundred and fifty siege and field guns, about half of which, perhaps, were of recent manufacture, many of the others being old cannon of little account. According to Claretie there were also over 130 mitrailleuses or machine-guns, but my own estimate, based on other figures, is that there were only about seventy mitrailleuses all told. There was, however, a like number of mortars or howitzers. Briefly, the Guards secured possession of nearly four hundred pieces of artillery which they detained chiefly at Montmartre, Ménilmontant, Belleville, La Chapelle, and the Buttes Chaumont. They appear to have held also about 500,000 rounds of ammunition for rifles and muskets, with which they were liberally supplied; but they had secured as yet very few projectiles, whether shells or round shot, for their artillery, the bulk of which, therefore, could not be used, though the mere fact that it was pointed on Paris from the northern and north-eastern heights, was quite sufficient to alarm the *bourgeoisie*.

In spite of their great armament the legions of the malcontents were somewhat disturbed by the presence of regular troops in Paris. During the armistice the Government forces had been limited to one division, together with the Gendarmerie, the Garde Républicaine, and so forth, the total being about 15,500 men. The ratification of the preliminaries of peace, however, enabled the authorities to raise their forces to about 40,000 regulars. They

felt that the Mobile Guards who had served in the city during the siege, had been more or less contaminated by their long sojourn there, and were more likely to be a source of trouble than of help in the event of any conflict occurring. These men were, therefore, sent home, and regulars were hurried to Paris from the provinces.

These proceedings, which the National Guards could not prevent, alarmed their Central Committee, which on March 10 issued from its headquarters at the Tivoli-Vauxhall a proclamation in which it said: "Soldiers, children of the people! Let us unite to save the Republic! Kings and Emperors have done quite harm enough. Do not sully your lives. Orders cannot override the responsibility of conscience. Let us embrace in front of those who, in order to acquire rank and position and bring back a King, wish to make us slaughter one another! May the Republic live for ever!"

Judging by subsequent events, this and similar appeals were not without effect. The men brought from the provinces were mainly young fellows incorporated in the army either shortly before or during the recent war, and they soon began to fraternize with the National Guards. Unfortunately for the Government, the veterans of the old Line Regiments and the Imperial Guard were not available, being still prisoners in Germany. At one moment, however, it seemed as if there might be some defection among the malcontent National Guards, for one battalion—the 61st—on duty at Montmartre, offered to give up the guns in its keeping. But this was promptly vetoed by the Montmartre Committee, which appears to have had the guns there under its control, and to have acted, in various respects, quite

independently of the organization installed at the Tivoli-Vauxhall.

At last, on the morning of Saturday, March 18, the Parisians found their city placarded with a proclamation in which Thiers and his ministers protested against the attempt to set up another Government by the side of the real one, and declared that the offenders would be brought to justice and the cannon purloined from the State restored to the arsenals. The authorities had decided, indeed, upon attempting a *coup de main*. D'Aurelle de Paladines had suggested that the National Guards should be called upon to take the guns, themselves, to the artillery stations, but that advice was dismissed, and two bodies of troops were mustered for the purpose of removing the ordnance by stratagem and force. The first body, commanded by General Susbielle, was divided into two columns, which advanced upon Montmartre, one under General Lecomte by way of the Rue Marcadet, and the other, under General Paturel, by way of the outer Boulevards. The other force was led by Generals Faron and La Mariouse, and had orders to seize the guns at Belleville and the Buttes Chaumont.

Montmartre was the principal position of the malcontents, who had about 170 pieces of artillery collected on the Place Saint-Pierre. Lecomte reached that point at about three o'clock in the morning, that is before daybreak, and the guardians of the guns, quite taken by surprise, were speedily overpowered. A few shots were certainly fired and a few men were wounded, several others being arrested for their attempts at resistance. It became necessary, however, to await the arrival of the horses which were to have removed the re-captured artillery,

and through some blunder or other these horses did not arrive. This gave the leaders of the National Guards time and opportunity to transform the situation. Drummers began to beat the assembly in several streets, and before long some thousands of Guards were at hand, ready to prevent the removal of the guns. Women also flocked to the scene, and were largely instrumental in prevailing on the soldiers to fraternize with the National Guard.

The first troops to raise the butt-ends of their rifles and refuse to obey their officers, were the men of the 88th regiment of the Line, which was under Lecomte's orders. Paturel's Linesmen also became insubordinate, but after great confusion and prolonged waiting some Chasseurs and artillerymen arrived, and he then attempted to remove such of the guns as could be harnessed to the belated teams. The crowd had become so dense, however, that the soldiers had the greatest difficulty in forcing their way through it. Whilst Paturel himself was retiring slowly down the almost precipitous Rue Lepic, he was bombarded with vegetables from a street-vendor's hand-cart, and on putting his horse to a trot it stumbled, throwing him to the ground, amidst the cheers of the jubilant National Guards. Luckily for him, he contrived to escape with the members of his staff, whilst the artillerymen in charge of the guns were surrounded by the Guards who speedily prevailed on them to abandon their duties and fraternize.

General Lecomte did not share his colleague's good fortune. On reaching the Place Pigalle with some of his men, who had also removed a few pieces of artillery, he was surrounded by Guards, and a brief *mêlée* ensued, a captain of Chasseurs, mounted

on a white horse, being shot dead, whilst other officers were fired on. A few of the soldiers retaliated, and some people in the crowd were wounded; but almost immediately afterwards shouts for fraternization arose, the troops joined the Guards, and Lecomte and some of his officers were dragged from their horses, made prisoners, and taken to a dancing hall known as the Château Rouge, in the Rue de Clignancourt.

Thus the Government's attempt to secure possession of the guns had failed, for although a number were removed from Belleville and the Buttes Chaumont by the columns operating in those directions, they had to be abandoned *en route* owing to the fraternization of the soldiers and the Guards. This became so general that the chief officers withdrew all the men they could, for fear lest the defection should become universal. On no point were they able to maintain their authority. During the morning a fireman employed by the Government succeeded in removing the red flag from the column on the Place de la Bastille, but shortly after midday when the troops, who had been stationed at that point, were withdrawn, the National Guards succeeded in rehoisting their cherished emblem—and, indeed, attached a long red streamer to the figure of Liberty above the column.

But such incidents as these were trivial in comparison with what happened at Montmartre. A captain of chasseurs and some artillerymen had been shot in the affray on the Place Pigalle, and now two generals were also to be put to death. Among the most vivid narratives of what occurred that day was one penned by Captain Beugnot, an orderly officer to General Le Flô, who was then Minister of

War. This document is the more valuable by reason of its extremely temperate tone, though it was written very shortly after the events which it describes, that is at a time when every passion was running riot. Beugnot (a descendant of the famous Comte Beugnot of the historical Memoirs) had orders to ride through Belleville and Montmartre and report to the Minister respecting the operations of the troops. He set out attended by two troopers, and at about 9 a.m., on reaching the upper end of the Boulevard Magenta, he was surrounded by a large party of National Guards, who threw him off his horse, took him prisoner, and marched him (like Lecomte) to the Château Rouge. There, he says, he was in the first instance interrogated by an old captain of the National Guard, who wore the *médaille de Juillet*, and who declared very proudly that he had been participating in Revolutions for forty years past. A little later Beugnot was taken upstairs, where he found a second captain, a certain Simon Mayer, who proved extremely polite, but declared that like another captive officer, Captain Franck of the Chasseurs-à-pied, he must be detained as a hostage. Sentries were put over them, and they were presently joined by five other prisoners, all of them military officers, two of whom had been abandoned by their men at the Northern Railway Station.

Remembering the fate of General Bréa and his aide-de-camp at the Barrière de Fontainebleau, during the rising of June, 1848, Beugnot feared the worst. After the lapse of several hours, however, he and the others were taken to a room downstairs, where they found General Lecomte, who had hitherto been kept there in solitary confinement. He looked

The Affray on the Place Pigalle.

calm and resolute as he returned the salutes of his own officers, and those of the officers of the National Guard who were present; but the men of the Guard repeatedly cursed him and threatened him with death. It has been said, and it may be quite correct, that during his stay at the Château Rouge, Lecomte was required both to sign an undertaking that he would not use his sword against the Parisians, and to send orders to those troops who were still at their posts to return to their quarters. It seems, however, that if he did send any such orders they never reached any officer of his command, and some accounts have it that he really refused to comply with any of the demands of his captors.

Born at Thionville in 1818, Claude Martin Lecomte was at this time fifty-three years old. He had seen active service in the Crimea, Italy, and Algeria, and at the beginning of the Franco-German War was assistant-commander of the famous military school of La Flèche, reserved for the sons of meritorious officers of the army and the navy. On being summoned to Paris, he served under General Ducrot in several sorties, and afterwards commanded a part of the Paris fortifications. He had just been appointed commander at La Flèche when orders reached him to assist in removing the guns from Montmartre. He was a married man, with five children.

An order, signed, it is said, by four unknown individuals, at last reached the Château Rouge, and the prisoners there were informed that they would be transferred elsewhere in order to be interrogated by the Central Committee. Their destination was the Rue des Rosiers, referred to in the opening pages of this volume. The Committee which met there

was not the Central Committee of the Tivoli-Vauxhall, but the local Central Committee of Montmartre, and it appears to have consisted of twenty members, the more notable of whom were the president, a Pole, said to have been named Landowski, the General Duval to whom I previously referred, and a certain Dardelles, who subsequently commanded at the Tuileries and set that palace on fire.

On their way to the Rue des Rosiers, Lecomte and the other captive officers were repeatedly assailed with threats and curses, and again and again the officers of the National Guard, in whose charge they had been placed, had to defend them from the violence of the mob. Matters became even worse when they reached the house described in my first chapter; and Beugnot mentions that a certain Lieutenant Meyer protected him at least a score of times from the bloodthirsty ruffians who were gathered around. The crowd constantly demanded that the captives should be put to death, and none were more violent than some of the soldiers who had been fraternizing with the Guards. Among those who forced their way into the house by one of its windows were a corporal of Foot Chasseurs, a soldier of the 88th of the Line, and two Mobile Guards. The second-named, who was in a state of fury, shouted to Lecomte: "You gave me thirty days of arrest, and I mean to put the first bullet in you!" For a long while the scene was awful, and the position became worse than ever when a white-bearded man wearing civilian attire with a silk hat, was suddenly thrust into the room amidst a chorus of execrations.

This was General Clément Thomas, who, whilst

walking along the Boulevard Ornano, watching the fraternization of the soldiers and the Guards, had been recognized and arrested by a certain Captain Aldenoff, who accused him of having come to take plans of the various batteries and barricades. Aldenoff placed Thomas in the charge of a Captain Ras, and the latter at once marched him to the Rue des Rosiers. I have mentioned Thomas previously,* but it is fitting that I should now give a short account of his career. Born of well-to-do parents at Libourne near Bordeaux, in 1809, he enlisted in the army soon after the Revolution of 1830 placed Louis-Philippe on the throne; but becoming involved in a Republican plot at Luneville he was court-martialed and sent to prison in April, 1835. After contriving to escape, he profited by an amnesty to return to France, and at the Revolution of 1848 he was elected a deputy and appointed, for the first time, Commander-in-Chief of the National Guard. During the June insurrection at that period he simply defended the National Assembly, and certain charges afterwards brought against him to the effect that he had shot several captive insurgents were false.

He subsequently tried to resist Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état*, and being outlawed on that account went abroad, and, like Victor Hugo, Louis Blanc and others, refused to profit by the amnesty of 1858. Indeed, it was only after the fall of the Empire that he returned to France, whereupon he became adjutant-general to Tamisier, who was then at the head of the Parisian National Guard. In December, during the siege, Thomas succeeded Tamisier, and in January he commanded a part of the Guard at the sanguinary sortie of Buzenval. The losses which were incurred

* See pp. 2, 20, *ante*.

on that occasion and Thomas's repeated efforts to ensure discipline had made him unpopular with many of the men, and Captain Beugnot declares in his narrative that the arrest of Thomas put an end to all hesitation in the Rue des Rosiers and rendered the tragedy which followed inevitable.

This, however, is by no means certain. In fact, other evidence shows that a mendacious charge trumped up against Lecomte to the effect that he had four times ordered his men to charge and shoot the women and children in the crowd on the Place Pigalle, was the determining factor in the tragedy. Some attempts were made to avert it. Among the throng of armed men assembled in Scribe's little house there was a Garibaldian officer named Herpin-Lacroix, who repeatedly endeavoured to constitute something akin to a court-martial, which should hear evidence on both sides, and act in a more or less regular manner. A Pole named, it is said, Kadanski —perhaps a mistake for Landowski *—also tried to secure a reprieve; but the more violent men around him would not hear of it. Such members of the Montmartre Central Committee as were present were shouted down and rendered powerless, and finally Clément Thomas was pushed into a passage leading to the garden. It was then about half-past five o'clock in the evening. Before Thomas could even take his stand against the wall he was fired at, but he turned, faced his murderers, with his hat in his hand, and proudly cried: "Vive la République!" So faulty was the marksmanship that he did not fall until a number of shots had been fired. Sixteen wounds were afterwards found in his body.

Meantime Lecomte was handing his purse to

* See p. 42, *ante*.

one of his fellow-prisoners, Commandant Poussargues, and speaking to him about his children. Communalist writers have asserted that the General gave signs of cowardice, but all the evidence is to the contrary effect. While he was being hurried along the passage leading to the garden the army officers who were present saluted him, and he returned their salutes. He, also, was fired at before he even reached the wall. He fell sooner than did Thomas, that is after being hit by nine bullets.

It is a remarkable fact that nearly all, if not indeed all, the men by whom these murders were perpetrated, were not National Guards, but belonged to the army. They included Linesmen, Foot Chasseurs, Zouaves, Paris Mobiles, and Francs-tireurs. They were commanded, however, it is said, by a Captain of the National Guard, who had been a scene-shifter at one of the Paris theatres. After the suppression of the Commune, twelve men connected with the affair were tried by court-martial, seven of them, including a Lieutenant of the National Guard named Lagrange, a sergeant called Verdaguer, Captain Aldenoff, and the Garibaldian Herpin-Lacroix incurring the death-penalty. In a letter which the last-named wrote to a friend prior to his execution, he declared that personally he had done his best to prevent the murders, and that the real assassins were quietly walking about the streets of London and Brussels. In Herpin-Lacroix's case it is at least certain that he made some attempt to defer matters. That was recognized in the case of the Pole called Kadanski or Landowski, who was simply sentenced to deportation. It may be added that immediately after the tragedy a statement was issued by some of the prisoners in the

Rue des Rosiers, including M. Camille Napoléon de Montebello and Count de Douville-Maillefeu (both retired naval officers), to the effect that the Montmartre Committee-men had done all they could to prevent the crime.*

At about six o'clock, according to Captain Beugnot, he and the other prisoners were taken back to the Château Rouge, the assassins abandoning the house in the Rue des Rosiers. On the way, says Beugnot, a pale-faced, scared-looking man, dressed in black and wearing a tricolour-sash, was encountered. He asked the custodians of the prisoners whither they were taking them, and then went off—presumably to the Rue des Rosiers. This individual was M. Georges Clemenceau, Mayor of Montmartre and a deputy for Paris.

Born in September, 1841, at Mouilleron-en-Pareds in La Vendée, the future *tombeur des ministères* (to give M. Clemenceau the nickname by which he was known for many years) had come to Paris to study at the École de Médecine, and after joining the medical profession had practised at Montmartre and acquired such popularity there as to become mayor of the district during the siege. At the time of the Commune it was urged that if he had acted more promptly and energetically, he might have saved the lives of Clément Thomas and Lecomte; but, in the first place, he appears to have been ignorant of their arrest until it was too late to intervene, and, secondly, only armed force, which was not available, could have prevented the tragedy in the Rue des Rosiers. In a debate which ensued

* On the proposal of General Trochu the National Assembly granted special pensions to the widows of Thomas and Lecomte, and the latter's children were adopted by the State.

in the National Assembly M. Clemenceau stated that he was in his private room at the town-hall of Montmartre when somebody rushed in, exclaiming: "If you do not come at once the Generals will be shot!" "On hearing this," added Clemenceau in his speech, "I made but one bound—but I arrived too late! I did my duty at the peril of my life. I made every effort which an indignant man could make." Those words were applauded by the deputies, and subsequently, at the court-martial held respecting the affair, M. Clemenceau gave full particulars of the various attempts which he had made that day to contend with the insurrection. We know that even the members of the Montmartre Committee were unable to prevent the shooting of the generals, and it is virtually certain that if M. Clemenceau had been on the spot he could have done no more than was done by the Committee-men themselves.

According to Captain Beugnot, when he, his fellow-captives and their custodians met M. Clemenceau in the street, the brief wrangle which ensued between the last-named, the guards, and the gathering crowd, almost placed the prisoners in jeopardy once more. They were reconveyed, however, to the Château Rouge, whither Simon Mayer returned with an order for their release. But their captors would not recognize it, although it appears to have emanated from the Central Committee. At last, Beugnot himself was taken before a certain Jaclard, who subsequently became a member of the Commune, and, after being interrogated by him, was able to get away with his comrade, Captain Franck. Commandant Poussargues and others, however, were only released on the following morning.

During the afternoon of March 18 great confusion

had prevailed in various parts of Paris. A number of the district mayors and their assessors met in conference and sent deputations both to Thiers and to D'Aurelle de Paladines. The latter was found in a state of great agitation. "I told the Government it would end like this!" he said. "They relied on the troops, and the troops are fraternizing with the rioters. It is for you, gentlemen, to take action. The fate of Paris, in fact that of France, is in your hands." The Parisian mayors and deputies thereupon proposed to Thiers the appointment of a new Chief Mayor, a new Prefect of Police, a new Minister of the Interior (Gambetta being suggested), and a new Commander of the National Guard—either Schoelcher, an old and tried Republican, or Langlois, a brave soldier who had become quite popular during the siege. But the Government, dismayed by the defection of the soldiers, adopted none of these measures. It preferred to withdraw all the troops from the right bank of the Seine, fearing—and with good reason—that there would be further defections, on a yet larger scale, should the soldiers and the insurgents again come in contact.

Thiers and most of his colleagues had assembled at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the Quai d'Orsay, where they kept in touch with Vinoy, who was directing the withdrawal of the troops.* On the side of the insurgents all for a time remained confusion. They apparently feared an attack on Montmartre, where, during the afternoon, I saw several more barricades thrown up. For a while there was no idea of descending into central Paris, for the Committee, not yet realizing that the city

* It appears that during the morning Thiers himself drove to various parts of Paris and personally observed the insubordination of the soldiers.

was almost at its mercy, feared that its partisans would meet with a very hostile reception there. According to his own account, however, a notorious character of that time, a certain Charles Lullier, resolved to take the bull by the horns. Born of *bourgeois* parents at Miremont in the Vosges, in 1838, he had begun life by joining the navy as an officer, but had repeatedly quarrelled with his comrades and insulted his superiors, in such wise that after being placed under arrest and suspended more than once, he had finally been dismissed the service. Extremely proud, with extravagant, even eccentric, ideas, he was at the same time very daring, and he may have really told the truth when he stated, during his subsequent trial at Versailles, that he initiated and directed the seizure of Central Paris by the insurgents—collecting a few battalions, ordering Bergeret to occupy the headquarters on the Place Vendôme, Brunel the Hôtel-de-Ville, Dardelles the Tuileries, and Duval the Prefecture of Police.

Those operations were carried into effect. Jules Ferry, who, as Mayor of Paris, held the Hôtel-de-Ville, was inclined to resist, but received instructions from Thiers to withdraw, and thus this edifice like many others fell into the hands of the insurgents whose advance continued until past midnight. Here let me mention that the omnibus services, revived since the siege, had gradually ceased during the afternoon. In the evening all the theatres, excepting that of the Palais-Royal, remained closed, though some of the dancing-halls opened in spite of the incessant ringing of the alarm-bells at Notre Dame, St. Merri, and other churches. On the Government side, Thiers, I believe, was one of the very first to leave for Versailles. Some of the Ministers remaining

in Paris, conferred during the evening at a house in the Rue Abbattucci. Ernest Picard, the Minister of the Interior, was there when he received an urgent message to the effect that the Ministry of Finances was threatened. He suggested, in reply, that the district National Guards—who had done good service in rescuing the Defence Government at the rising of October 31 during the siege, and on whom he thought full reliance might be placed—should be called out to defend the Treasury, but only some fifty men responded to the summons, and in the morning this building also was occupied by the insurgents without the slightest resistance.

Meantime, Vinoy had been concentrating his troops at the École Militaire and on the Champ de Mars in front of it. One cannot say exactly how many men he assembled. Government accounts say 40,000, others as few as 20,000; but my own estimate would be midway between these two, for allowance should be made for the many defections which had occurred and for all the men who were "forgotten" at one or another point—as in the Rue de la Santé and the Luxembourg Gardens.* It was only at one o'clock on the morning of March 19 that Vinoy withdrew from Paris with the last men whom he had got together and the remaining members of the Government. The War Minister, General Le Flô, went in the first carriage, Jules Simon, Dufaure, and D'Aurelle being in a second one, Mounted

* The men in the Rue de la Santé were left without rations, and only procured food from the insurgents by surrendering their chassepots at midday on the 19th. On the other hand, 1200 men, under Commandant Perrier, who had been left in the Luxembourg grounds, refused to surrender in spite of Lullier's violent and repeated threats, and marched to Versailles on March 21, when they were virtually starving. Perrier was thereupon promoted to a Lieutenant-Colonelcy.

Gendarmes guarded the streets and accompanied the vehicles. I saw Vinoy, who was then seventy-one years old, on horseback, superintending everything.

Thus, in the dead of night, was Paris abandoned, and some may hold that the Government acted wrongly in withdrawing from the city, and leaving it at the mercy of the insurgents. But, as I pointed out in my book, "Republican France," Thiers had witnessed the Revolutions of 1830, 1848, and 1870, and he knew right well how vain had been the attempts of the Bourbon and Orleans monarchies to save themselves by offering resistance in Paris. Then, and on other occasions, the capital, or a part of it, had prevailed because the authorities had disappeared without making any appeal to the rest of France. Thiers held, therefore, that the proper course was to make such an appeal, and to organize, outside the rebellious city, a proper resistance to the insurrectionary movement. The position was not the same as in the past. France had only just elected a sovereign Legislature to restore not merely peace but law and order generally, and an overwhelming majority of Frenchmen was opposed to the establishment of any Commune of Paris. Whatever outbreaks might occur here and there in the provinces—and there were more or less serious affairs at Lyons, Marseilles, Toulouse, Saint-Étienne, and Narbonne—the bulk of the country might be relied upon to support the authorities in asserting the sovereignty of the law, provided proper steps to that effect were adopted. Had the Government remained in Paris it would simply have been overwhelmed. More than one of its members might have been speedily assassinated. After the first

defections only a few of the soldiers could be relied upon, and desertions *en masse* were to be feared.

I may be asked why it was that the soldiers did not do their duty at this stage of affairs. I answer that in many instances it was because they had little confidence in or liking for the officers under whom they had been so often led to defeat; also because they were loath to fire on their own countrymen; and, in particular, because they were really tired of fighting and did not wish to begin another war when they had scarcely emerged from a previous one. In certain instances political motives had something to do with the defections. But the bulk of these young fellows from the provinces were by no means ardent Republicans. In the main they were, as I have said, tired of soldiering, and only too ready to disband.

At a later stage, that is at the time when the Commune was crushed, something very different was witnessed. The soldiers who were then chiefly employed, had belonged to the imperial armies, and, on returning from their long captivity in Germany, were angered at being called upon to subdue Paris. That anger was shown by the rigour of the reprisals which visited the insurgents. When the Commune began, moreover, its partisans were able to claim some sympathy. But they commanded none after all the folly and fury of their short spell of power. Thus there were great changes in the position of affairs, and it is easy to understand, on the one hand, the supineness of the troops at the rising of March 18, and, on the other, their energy during the so-called Bloody Week of May, though even then their officers feared lest they might fail in their duty, and, on that account as much as

for strategical reasons, generally outflanked the Communalists instead of attempting frontal attacks upon their positions.

The reader will have noticed that I have made this present chapter as impersonal as possible in order to give a general idea of the affair of March 18 ; but I witnessed, either alone or in the company of my father and my brother, a variety of the day's many incidents. I was particularly struck by the behaviour of the disaffected soldiers. In many instances they at once surrendered their chassepots and their sword-bayonets to the National Guards. In others, they sold their weapons for a few francs, and then betook themselves to wine-shops where they soon got intoxicated. During the following days one constantly met in the streets wandering, unarmed soldiers without quarters and without food. There were times when some foolish and repentant fellows asked how they might rejoin their battalions. A few, I believe, contrived to do so ; but under stress of circumstances and fear of punishment the bulk became merged in the Communalist forces.

III

UNDER THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE

Government and Insurgent Proclamations—Some Members of the Central Committee—Fears of the Germans—The Government and the Forts—The Insurgents seize the Arsenal of Vincennes—Arrest of General Chanzy and Others—Chanzy saved by Cremer—Gaillard of the Barricades—Loyal Guards, Mayors, and Deputies bestir themselves—Protest of the Press—The penniless Committee and the Bank of France—Struggle for some district Town Halls—The Barricades armed with Cannon—A brief Visit to the Hôtel-de-Ville—Demonstrations of the Friends of Order—Admiral Saisset—The Tragedy of the Rue de la Paix—Thousands of People quit Paris—The Germans decide on Neutrality—The Committee accepts the Peace Terms—Further Attempts at Conciliation—Contests between Loyalists and Insurgents—Dissensions in the Committee—New Military Appointments—Fall of Lullier and Du Bisson—The Committee's Fears of Defeat—Its Sub-Committee of Vigilance—The Eve of the Elections.

On Sunday, March 19, we were favoured with two versions of the *Journal Officiel*, one emanating from the regular government and the other, towards the evening, from the insurgents. The former contained a couple of proclamations to the National Guard, one referring to the "absurd rumour" that the authorities were preparing a *coup d'état* and declaring that the government of the Republic could have no other object than the Republic's salvation; whilst the second, signed by the last ministers who had left Paris during the small hours of the morning, called upon the Guards, if they had any thought of honour and the most sacred interests, to rally round the Republican Government and the

National Assembly. On the other hand, the insurgents, who had seized the printing works of the *Journal Officiel* after the usual morning issue of that organ had been struck off, announced that in accordance with the laws of war, General Lecomte had been punished for commanding four charges on the people, and General Clément Thomas for taking plans of the barricades at Montmartre. Thus, the leaders of the insurrection formally accepted responsibility for the tragedy of the Rue des Rosiers, though, as I previously showed, it had taken place independently of their authority. Remembering, however, the feelings of many of their partisans, they probably thought it injudicious to disown the affair and preferred to issue an utterly false account of it.

On the same day appeared a proclamation, which after declaring that the state of siege was raised in Paris and that the inhabitants would be convoked to elect a Commune, set forth that the people had at last cast off its bonds, and thanked the army for having refrained from laying hands upon the "sacred ark of Liberty." This factum acquainted us with the names of at least some of our new rulers, for it was signed by the following members of the Central Committee: Assi, Babick, Barroud, Billioray, Blanchet, Boursier, C. Dupont, Fabre, Ferrat, Geresme, Gouhier, Grollard, Fr. Jourde, Lavalette, Ch. Lullier, Ed. Moreau, Mortier, Pougeret, Rousseau, and Varlin. Among the other committee-men at this juncture were Andignoux, the two Avoines (father and son), Casimir Bouis, Castioni, Chouteau, Grélier, Josselin, Lacord, Larocque, Maxime Lisbonne, and Maljournal. Some of the above were subsequently elected members of

the Commune, whereas others took office under it or disappeared from the scene after the elections.

Among those who then proved unsuccessful candidates were Andignoux, a publican who a little later tried to overthrow the Commune with the assistance of its war-delegate Rossel; the two Avoines, who were sculptors' modellers and who escaped abroad when the end came; Barroud, who after the first day or two, never attended the Committee's deliberations; Bouis, who as a journalist was very terrible on paper, but otherwise insignificant; Boursier, who ended by blaming the Commune's violence and refused to set fire to the Palais Royal; Castioni, a Piedmontese thief, who was arrested on attempting to leave France; Chouteau, whose dream was to found the "United States of Europe," and who, under the Commune, undertook to superintend its cavalry; Fabre, a commercial clerk who led a loose life; Ferrat, whom the Central Committee consigned to durance as a "suspect"; Gouhier, an ugly, ignorant, and violent individual, who sank to nothingness; Grollard, who had swallowed swords at suburban fairs; and Grélier, a pretentious, talkative, and insinuating little man who became for a time the Committee's *délégué à l'Intérieur* and one of the Commune's *délégués aux subsistances*, in which last capacity, when the Week of Bloodshed began, he issued a notice saying: "The absentee inhabitants of Paris are invited to return to their homes within eight and forty hours, after which delay their bonds (*titres de rente*) and the Ledger of France will be burnt."

Further, among the men who ceased to figure in the foremost rank after the elections of the Commune, there was Josselin, an ex-clerk of the Comptoir

SOME MEN OF THE COMMUNE (I).

1. *Mabille.*
2. *Grelier.*
3. *P. Grousset.*
4. *Cournet.*

d'Escompte and a fraudulent banker; Larocque, a former seminarist, who for some days commanded at the Hôtel-de-Ville; and Lacord who had kept an eating-house patronized by numerous Communards. This man was so proud of the custom of Raoul Rigault, who became the Commune's Public Prosecutor, that he refused to take payment for the meals supplied to him, declaring in a letter, the spelling of which deserves to be respected: "C'est baucou d'oneur pour moi que vous ayé mangé chez moi." Of Lavalette I have previously spoken.* He was brave, and so was his friend Maxime Lisbonne, who had enlisted as a Zouave when seventeen years old, and, on quarrelling with four comrades, had fought and wounded every one of them in a rapid succession of duels. On quitting the service, Lisbonne had taken to the stage and even established a theatrical company, but he was a bad man of business, and bankruptcy supervened more than once. I shall have occasion to refer to Lisbonne again. His comrade Moreau, who was clever and ambitious, became for an instant the Commune's Delegate at War, but was replaced by Delescluze. There was also Maljournal, a bookbinder, who was wounded in the back during the affair of the Rue de la Paix, which I shall presently describe; there was Pougeret, who was appointed to the tailoring department of the National Guard; and there was Rousseau, the door-porter of a lodging-house in the Rue d'Amsterdam, a big and ugly man but possessed of rather more common sense than was enjoyed by the great majority of his colleagues.

When the Central Committee assumed the government of Paris on March 19, Adolphe Alphonse Assi,

* See p. 26, *ante*.

who afterwards figured as a member of the Commune, became its president. He was an adherent of the International, and after serving in the army, had been employed as an engineer at the Creusot iron works, where he had acquired great notoriety by fomenting strikes. He had also participated in a strike of the coal miners at Anzin, and had been implicated in the proceedings taken against the French "Internationalists" at Blois. About one and thirty years of age in 1871, he was supposed to be of Italian origin, and his complexion certainly suggested that he belonged to a southern race. Slim and of medium height, he had a very good-looking face, and was greatly admired by women, to whom he was extremely partial, much to the horror and disgust of his strait-laced colleagues, Delescluze and Chouteau. He had, however, a favourite mistress with whom he lived in the Place de la Corderie near the Temple.

Greatly impressed by Edgar Quinet's work "Les Révolutions d'Italie," Assi dreamt of establishing independent Communal governments—somewhat similar to those of the ancient Italian cities—upon all sides, so as to free France, he said, from Cæsarism and monarchy for ever. But the setting up of fifty, sixty, or perhaps a hundred Communes in different parts of France was no easy task; and as most of the employés of the telegraph service quitted their posts, and the Government seized the wires outside Paris, the revolutionary leaders were largely frustrated in their attempts to get into immediate communication with the provinces. Thiers, moreover, was already telegraphing on all sides that the army had retired in good order to Versailles where the National Assembly would speedily meet, and

that, under penalty of dismissal, all civil and military authorities must obey the orders of the Versailles Government and of none other.

The insurgent leaders were not without their fears. All sorts of rumours circulated among the thousands of people who thronged the streets on Sunday, March 19. One was to the effect that Thiers had already summoned 120,000 troops to Versailles, while according to another the Germans intended to march into the city at once. It should be remembered that a considerable portion of French territory was still occupied by the invaders, who also held the outlying forts on the north and the east of Paris. A part of the German Third Army Corps was stationed at the town of Saint Denis, virtually holding the Northern Railway Line, its commander-in-chief, General von Fabrice, having his headquarters at Compiègne. With the Germans on one side of them and the regular Government on another, the position of the insurgents seemed by no means secure, but, as we shall soon see, the Germans preferred, yet once again, to let the French "stew in their own juice."

Thiers, at this moment, made perhaps a mistake in ordering the Government troops who garrisoned such of the outlying forts as were not held by the Germans, to evacuate them and retire to Versailles. These forts were those on the west and the south of the city, such as Mont Valérien, Issy, Vanves, and Montrouge. Thiers feared, of course, that the soldiers there would fraternize with the insurgents, and so the forts were evacuated. But it was pointed out that although some of them had been badly damaged by the German fire during the siege, and had since been dismantled of their guns, one

of them, Mont Valérien, occupied a commanding position, and if left to the insurgents might prove a most formidable obstacle in any attempt to regain possession of Paris. Mont Valérien was, therefore, re-occupied by a picked force, and eventually played no unimportant part in reducing the insurgents to submission. They, on their side, were fortunate in securing the so-called fort of Vincennes—less a fort, perhaps, according to modern ideas, than an arsenal and a workshop. It was held by a body of artillerymen and foot-chasseurs, and when, on March 19 or 20, some of the National Guards marched to Vincennes and called on the commandant to surrender, he refused to do so. But a number of his men were fractious, and one of them, named Brunet—a quartermaster-sergeant, I believe—prevailed on several of his comrades to damage the guns in order that they might not be used against the insurgents. In the result, Vincennes surrendered on the morning of March 22, and the partisans of the Committee obtained possession of much ammunition (particularly such as was needed for artillery, which was perhaps their chief requirement) as well as of a quantity of army provisions and other stores. As for Brunet, the traitor, when his exploit was accomplished, he disappeared, and was, I think, never heard of again.

Another early incident in the insurrection must be mentioned here. Among those who, knowing nothing of the day's occurrences, unsuspectingly arrived in Paris on March 18, was General Chanzy, lately the commander-in-chief of the Second Loire Army.* On alighting from a train at the

* See "My Days of Adventure," which contains no little information respecting him.

Gare d'Orléans he was immediately arrested by some National Guards, who did not recognize him, but who could tell by his uniform that he was a general officer. Another passenger, Edmond Turquet, a deputy belonging to the same part of France as Chanzy, was acquainted with him, however, and proclaimed his identity. Nevertheless, although the general had formally adhered to the Republic, and had secured 63,000 votes in Paris at the recent elections without even being a candidate there, he was marched off to the National Guards' prison in the Avenue d'Italie, M. Turquet accompanying him, as, for some unexplained reason, he wished to be arrested also. About this time, on the opposite side of Paris, Generals Lecomte and Thomas were being assassinated, and it more than once seemed as if Chanzy would meet with a similar fate. Laurence Oliphant told me that the general declared to him after his release that on two occasions during his captivity firing parties were got together and he was led into a yard to be "executed." He found, however, a vigorous defender in M. Léo Meillet, assessor to the mayor of the 13th Arrondissement, and was transferred first to the prison of La Santé, and next to that of Mazas. In addition to M. Turquet, Chanzy there had as a fellow-prisoner General de Langourian, who arrived in Paris on March 19 and was in like manner arrested.

A certain Mme. Thévenet, Chanzy's sister-in-law, endeavoured to secure his release, obtaining an order to that effect from Duval,* who described himself as "generalissimo of the land and sea forces of the 13th arrondissement." But Chanzy's custodians treated this order with contempt, and he remained

* See p. 29, *ante*.

in durance. At last, the Society of Alsatians and Lorrainers in Paris, presided over by Commander Aronssohn, protested in his favour, and he secured a further advocate in General Cremer, who had commanded in a part of eastern France during the war, had there worsted the Germans in one or two minor engagements, and was generally supposed to be an extreme Republican. Cremer came to Paris and solicited an interview with the Central Committee, which jumped to the conclusion that he wished to place his victorious sword at its disposal. It received him, therefore, with open arms and offered him the supreme command of its forces. He asked for time to consider that proposal, pleaded Chanzy's cause, and a few days later (March 25), with the assistance of Commandant Aronssohn, he secured the release of Chanzy and Langourian and accompanied them to Versailles. I am not certain whether Chanzy entered into any undertaking not to serve against the insurgents, but neither he nor Cremer figured among the generals who afterwards subdued the insurrection. At first the commander-in-chief of the troops assembled by the Government was Ducrot, who was succeeded by Marshal MacMahon.

I must now revert to the first days of the Central Committee's sway in Paris. As I previously said, the streets were crowded on Sunday, March 19, many thousands of people turning out to witness the so-called triumph of the National Guards, and to watch the building of the many barricades which were now arising in the central quarters of the city. Elaborate defences were devised for the Hôtel de Ville —the Rue de Rivoli, the Avenue Victoria, and the Quai de Gesvres, being strongly barricaded under

the supervision of Gaillard *père*, a shoemaker by trade, who, at the fall of the Empire, had been appointed to see that all imperial emblems were removed from public buildings, and who had served under Henri Rochefort on the Commission des Barricades during the German siege. We are often told that a cobbler should stick to his last, and Gaillard reverted to his during subsequent years of exile; but, judging by the wonderful obstructions and fortifications which he raised in the streets of Paris, he was entitled to rank as the Vauban of the Commune.

Whilst the approaches to the Hôtel-de-Ville were being fortified against any attack on the part either of the soldiery of or such National Guards as had remained loyal to the constituted authorities, the Central Committee was holding its first governmental meeting in the Throne Room of the municipal palace. Assi presided. The elections for the Commune were fixed for the 22nd. It was decided to distribute arms to all adherents who had none. An amnesty for all political offences was voted. The "official" account of the "execution" of Lecomte and Thomas, "in accordance with military law" (an account drafted by Geresme), was passed unanimously. The permanent army courts-martial were declared abolished, and, finally, delegates were appointed to various ministries and offices.

Meantime, some first attempts were being made to resist the authority of the Committee. Now that the wealthier quarters of Paris were more or less invaded by men "with faces such as were only seen on days of Revolution" (to quote a frequent expression of that time), *bourgeois* of divers categories, who had not stirred on the previous day, were

beginning to evince alarm. Their battalions remained —in part, at all events—loyal to the Government, and still had possession of several important public buildings, including some of the district town halls. At the same time the governmental mayors of fifteen of the twenty arrondissements and several of their assessors—such men as Clemenceau, Arnaud de l'Ariège, Léo Meillet, Henri Martin the historian, Tirard the future minister, and Bonvalet the famous *restaurateur*—together with some of the Paris deputies —Louis Blanc, Edward Lockroy, Martin Bernard, Colonel Langlois, Henri Brisson, Edmond Adam, Floquet, Peyrat, Greppo, Farcy, Schoelcher, and even the Socialist Millière,* were endeavouring to bring about some compromise between the contending parties. It was suggested among other things that the Assembly should concede to Paris the right to elect a general Municipal Council (such as it possesses nowadays), and that the National Guards should be empowered to elect all their officers. During the next few days the attempts to come to an understanding on those points and others were renewed, but remained abortive as will soon be seen. For a variety of reasons, however, the municipal or communal elections were postponed first from the 22nd till the 23rd, and then till March 26.

On the 20th thirty-one of the principal newspapers, none of them being, however, a radical or an extremist organ, protested against any illegal convocation of the electors—which protest the Committee answered by declaring that it would not allow its decisions and orders to be disobeyed. At its sitting on the 20th, on it being pointed out

* Clemenceau and Tirard, whom I have included among the mayors, were also deputies.

that there was no money to pay the National Guards or to supply the wants of the disbanded soldiers who were wandering about Paris, the Committee resolved to apply to the Bank of France and other financial institutions for the necessary funds. With regard to money, the new "government" was in a difficult position at this moment, for the so-called "men of Versailles" had at least taken the precaution to remove all funds from the Ministry of Finances. It appears that the Committee first demanded a loan of £20,000 from Baron de Rothschild, who replied, however, that he neither recognized its authority nor had any money in Paris. It was afterwards that successive demands were made on the Bank of France, whose directors advanced first £40,000, and somewhat later a like amount, in order, presumably, to prevent the Bank from being pillaged. Camille Pelletan declares in his little book "Le Comité central et la Commune," that the above advances were made on the authority of one of the Bank's governors, M. Roulland, an old Bonapartist, in fact a former minister of Napoleon III, and that if the money had not been forthcoming the insurrection would have collapsed. It is at least certain that the Bank was at this period stoutly defended by loyal National Guards, and that the Committee would not have secured possession of its funds without a sanguinary struggle.

Another story, told me during the Commune, was to the effect that the Bank authorities at first refused to supply a single franc unless they received official orders to do so. Now, although Varlin, who was the Committee's delegate at the Ministry of Finances,* had found little or no cash there, he

* He was succeeded by Jourde under the Commune.

had come upon some blank forms which, according to custom, Pouyer-Quertier, the Finance Minister, had signed in advance so that they might be utilized as occasion should require. Varlin, it is said, thereupon filled in the blanks, and the first two million francs secured by the insurgents were obtained by this means. However, I cannot absolutely vouch for the accuracy of the story.

Day by day fresh proclamations, manifestoes, and protests were placarded on the walls of Paris. They emanated from the Committee, from the deputies and mayors, and from various individuals —such as old Blanqui, the lifelong conspirator— who desired to air their views. There were still two official journals, one produced by the Committee in Paris, and the other by the Government at Versailles. The former announced that the payment of all bills of exchange was prorogued for one month, and that no landlord or hotel-keeper was to give notice to quit to any tenant. The Government on its side issued, on behalf of the Assembly, a long protest to the nation and the army respecting the insurrection; and meanwhile the Paris deputies denounced the Assembly for sitting at Versailles instead of in the capital. At the same moment that filthy journal *Le Père Duchêne*, edited by the foul-mouthed Vermesch, was publishing articles of the most violent description, such as one on the Terror of 1793, when, he significantly pointed out, priests and nobles had been very righteously guillotined.

Here and there at this juncture the contending parties in Paris, the Committee's adherents and the Government's, came into conflict. A certain Dr. Tony Moilin had taken forcible possession of the

Luxembourg town-hall on March 18. On the 21st, however, he was expelled by one of the *adjoints* of the district at the head of some loyal Guards. General Lullier of the Committee thereupon marched to the spot with a thousand of his men in order to crush the loyalists by whom Moilin had been dispossessed. But they were reinforced by others, who thought as they did; and although Lullier shouted repeatedly: "*Tonnerre de Dieu!* We have two hundred and fifty battalions behind us," the little force occupying the town-hall steadily refused to give way to him. Further, the constituted authorities at the town-hall of the second arrondissement (Bourse) also declined to retire in favour of the emissaries of the Committee.

That same day (March 21) the latter decided that the gates of Paris should henceforward be closed at 8 instead of at 10 p.m. Watch was set on all the railway-stations, and many people were prevented from leaving the city. Both M. de Lareinty, a deputy, and Louis Ulbach, a well-known writer, were arrested for attempting to travel to Versailles. Now also the barricades were finally armed with cannon. Field-pieces were set in position on the Place Vendôme (where the headquarters of the National Guard were situated) in order to sweep both the Rue de la Paix and the Rue Castiglione whenever occasion might require. At the Hôtel-de-Ville all was confusion. I went there in search of a permit to enable me to go in and out of Paris, but was referred to the "ex-Prefecture of Police." During my brief stay I perceived that the building was crowded with National Guards, some of whom were more or less intoxicated. Most of the old ushers, who had waited on successive Prefects of

the Seine, had departed to Versailles, but a few of the ordinary attendants remained. One of them told me that quite £100 worth of brandy and wine, found in the cellars, had been consumed since the night of the 18th, and that not a scrap of food remained in the building. On it being discovered that I did not possess any *carte de circulation*—these, it appeared, were only delivered to known adherents of the Committee *—a fierce-looking individual, bedizened with gold lace, ordered me to depart, which I at once did, glancing as I went at the many inscriptions of "Vive la Commune!" and "Death to thieves!" scrawled upon the walls.

At the Committee's sitting that day (still March 21) Varlin complained yet once again of the lack of money. It was then suggested that a tax should be levied on all the receipts of the railway companies, and that another should be imposed on all ministers, senators, and deputies who had voted for the war with Prussia. Lisbonne, for his part, pointed out that there were no provisions left at the Hôtel-de-Ville, which, said he, was liable to be besieged. It was therefore agreed that supplies should be requisitioned from Government purveyors. Another member, named Viard, called on the Committee to suppress all demonstrations against it. He had doubtless just heard that one had occurred that very day.

About two o'clock in the afternoon a large number of people who were known as the "Friends of Order," assembled on the Boulevards near the Rue Drouot, and marched upon various points, one body going towards the Place Vendôme, but

* Lullier had selected two battalions of "stalwarts" to garrison the Hôtel-de-Ville.

promptly retiring on seeing the guns and the Guards there, whilst another made its way to the Place de la Bourse, where it vented its feelings by shouting, "Vive l'Ordre! À bas le Comitè!" and "Vive l'Assemblée Nationale!" All that was not very dreadful, but in the evening there was such great excitement on the Boulevards, whither I repaired with my father and my brother, that every café from the Chaussée d'Antin to the Faubourg Montmartre was speedily closed. Among the crowd one observed quite a number of quarrels—several disputants became extremely violent, arms and sticks were frequently raised, and sundry hats fell upon the pavement. After all, however, these occurrences were mere *bagarres.*

On the following day matters became far more serious. We had a foretaste of what the installation of the Commune would mean. I remember having *déjeuner* with my father and my brother Arthur at a little restaurant in the narrow Rue de Montpensier behind the Palais Royal. The establishment, which was known as Joseph's, appealed to people of moderate means, and specialized in such simple dishes as *sole au vin blane*, *riz de veau*, and *rognons brochette.* After our meal, to which like most Parisians we sat down about midday, we mounted the steps leading to the end of the Rue Vivienne, and turned into that thoroughfare which, for English people, Thackeray immortalized in his famous "Bouillabaisse" ballad:

> "A street there is, in Paris famous,
> For which no rhyme our language yields,
> Rue Neuve des Petits Champs its name is,
> The New Street of the Little Fields."

Following its course, we speedily drew near

to the corner of the Rue de la Paix. A short time previously, that is about one o'clock, a large number of people had assembled on the Place de l'Opéra. Prominent among them was Vice-Admiral Saisset, who had commanded some of the sailors during the siege, having charge, too, of various forts on the eastern side of Paris. Saisset was sincerely desirous of arriving at pacification by conciliatory measures, and used all the influence he possessed to that effect. He had already been urged to assume the command of those National Guards, chiefly of the *bourgeois* classes, who had remained loyal to the Government, but in the absence of precise orders to that effect, he had hitherto declined to do so. On this occasion, however, he consented to place himself at the head of another demonstration of the "Friends of Order." *

I will not say that this demonstration was precisely sensible, or likely to have effect with the partisans of the Central Committee. Not a year elapses without our witnessing in London many demonstrations which are by no means sensible, and which have no effect whatever. Nobody nowadays cares a rap about any march to Hyde Park or even to Westminster, as the Suffragettes are well aware. But we must carry our minds back to the year 1871, when demonstrations were as much believed in as they are derided now. That of March 22 was chiefly attended by members of the *bourgeois* class, among whom there were undoubtedly many people who were opposed to a Republic as well as to a Commune. It was, however, virtually an unarmed demonstration; though it cannot be

* Born January 13, 1810, and belonging to a family of Montpellier, J. M. J. T. Saisset died in Paris, May 25, 1879.

gainsaid that a score of participants carried sword-sticks or revolvers for self-protection.

Whatever may have been asserted afterwards, the intention of the demonstrators was undoubtedly pacific. Even when men have a few weapons among them, they do not deliberately march with hostile intentions on a position bristling with field-pieces, chassepots, and bayonets. There could be no idea on their part of forcibly seizing the Place Vendôme. Only madmen could have dreamt of any such scheme, and these folk were led by an old officer of great experience, who would have scouted such a project. He, Admiral Saisset, went in front, attended by a young man who carried a large tricolour flag. The Admiral intended to harangue the National Guards massed on the Place Vendôme, and to entreat them, in the country's interests, to abandon their revolutionary proceedings and return to discipline and duty. Looking back, I feel that there was not the slightest prospect of the Admiral's eloquence prevailing, and I think, therefore, that the attempt was ill-advised. In those days, however, everybody believed in speeches, demonstrations, proclamations, and manifestoes, and thus there was nothing out of the way in this gathering of the Friends of Order.

They marched down the Rue de la Paix led by the Admiral and the tricolour, and a few National Guards, forming advanced pickets, as it were, seemed inclined to listen to the exhortations addressed to them. The leaders of the column then passed on, still going towards the Place Vendôme. At that moment my father, my brother, and myself reached the corner of the Rue Neuve des Petits Champs. For half a minute, perhaps, we remained there

watching the procession. Then shots rang out. There were at least two, perhaps three, volleys, and the crowd at once stampeded, some men rushing back up the Rue de la Paix, others darting into the Rue Neuve Saint-Augustin, and others hastening in our direction. Immediately in front of the Place Vendôme, men who were dead or dying lay upon the ground. Others who were wounded, staggered away, supported by their friends. I caught a glimpse of fallen hats and sticks, and was then swept from the spot in the wild rush which was made for safety, along the Rue Neuve des Petits Champs.

At the very moment when Saisset was about to address the insurgents guarding the Place Vendôme, they had fired on him and his followers. The young man carrying the flag sprang in front of the Admiral, and fortunately neither of them was hit, though a couple of bullets went through the flag. Ten of the demonstrators were killed, however, and from twenty to thirty were wounded. There was, at the time, a report that the number of victims exceeded a hundred, but that was exaggeration. Even when reduced to its proper proportions, the affair was terrible enough. Among the dead were the Vicomte de Mollinet (son of General Martin de Mollinet) and an old commissionaire known as Pierre, who for years past had stood, waiting to execute errands, at the corner of the Rue Neuve Saint-Augustin. A bullet struck this poor fellow in the forehead and blew out his brains. M. Hottinguer, a high official of the Bank of France, was killed at the second or third discharge, whilst trying to help a wounded man to his feet. Among the wounded also was that peaceable old gentleman, M. Baudry,

the foreign bookseller, as well as that pugnacious journalist, Henri de Pène, editor of the *Paris-Journal.* He was struck in the groin, and would have fallen had not his friend, Guy de Charnacé, helped him to stagger from the spot.

On the other hand, a few National Guards were wounded, and Maljournal, a member of the Committee, received an injury in the back. It appears certain, however, that this was the result of the clumsy firing of some of the Guards, which was also chiefly responsible for the wounds incurred by their comrades. I think it possible that a few of the demonstrators may have replied to the platoon-firing by discharging revolvers; but the subsequent assertions of the Central Committee that the demonstrators began the affair by firing on the advanced pickets of the National Guard, were merely commonplace examples of its audacious mendacity. The platoon-firing was, I believe, actually ordered by the Committee's General, Bergeret, though he afterwards asserted the contrary, declaring that he had done his best to restrain the Guards. It was, however, the Committee's Chief of Staff, Raoul du Bisson, who reported on the affair that same afternoon, whereupon a vote of congratulation was passed, declaring that he and his officers had deserved well of the country!

A day or two later, Paschal Grousset, Delegate for Foreign Affairs, issued a statement asserting that the affair of the Rue de la Paix had been a daring attack on the Guards, planned by order of the Man of December and Sedan, otherwise Napoleon III. Grousset added that every demonstration was engineered by Bonapartist and Orleanist agents, who went about distributing money, and he

threatened all and sundry with condign punishment. This young fop's effrontery, whilst he deemed himself secure, was only equalled by his cowardice when danger at last threatened him.

One result of the Rue de la Paix demonstration was that the Central Committee ordered the gates of Paris to be closed, and gave instructions that no soldiers or suspicious characters should be allowed to quit the city. It was resolved, moreover, that the wandering soldiers should be incorporated in the National Guard. Further, Citizen Viard pointed out during the Committee's sitting on March 22, that in order to prevent any demonstrations in future, an adequate force of cavalry ought to be organized. This was agreed upon, it being resolved that the necessary horses should be requisitioned. Meantime, all the remaining foreigners who had flocked to Paris to see what the city looked like after the German siege, were hastily departing from the hotels. Many Parisians followed this example, and on March 26 it was estimated that quite 100,000 people had quitted the capital during the week which had elapsed since the outbreak of the insurrection.

Late on the evening of the 22nd the Committee's adherents made serious attempts on the town hall of the Bourse district, and the much coveted Bank of France, but were victoriously repulsed by the loyal Guards of the 11th Battalion. On this occasion the Marquis de Plœuc chiefly directed the operations for the protection of the Bank, of which he was one of the assistant-governors. On the morrow the resistance to the Committee became more pronounced, the loyalists holding all that part of the city which extends between the Boulevards, the Saint-Honoré

market, the Palais Royal, the Bank, and the Rue Montmartre. They were also entrenched in the then unfinished opera-house, they recaptured the town-hall in the Rue Drouot, and they occupied the Cour des Comptes across the Seine, though the Committee's men were in possession of the adjacent Palais Bourbon.

The great event that day, however, was the publication in the Committee's *Journal Officiel* of a communication received from General von Fabrice, commander of the German forces. Addressed to "the present Commander in Paris," and dated March 21, this missive ran as follows: "The undersigned, Commander-in-Chief of the Third Corps, takes the liberty to state that the German troops occupying the forts on the north and the east of Paris and the suburbs on the right bank of the Seine, have received orders to preserve a *friendly* and passive attitude so long as the events of which the interior of Paris is the scene, do not assume towards the German armies a hostile character of a nature to place them in danger, but are kept within the limits prescribed by the preliminaries of peace. Should the events, however, assume a hostile character, the city of Paris will be treated as an enemy.—For the Commander-in-chief of the Third Corps of the Imperial Armies. Signed: Von Schlotheim, Major-General."

The reader will perhaps scarcely believe that the Central Committee falsified this document before communicating it to the public. Yet such was the case, for the word "friendly," which I have italicized in the above translation, did not figure in the original —the word used by General von Schlotheim being simply "neutral." However, the patriotic Central

Committee, which in the last days of the siege had hurled so many epithets and imprecations at the German barbarians, now wished it to appear that the conquerors regarded the insurgents in a friendly spirit. Perhaps it was so—at all events, at a later stage, there were various intrigues (such as secret negotiations respecting the purchase of horses) between the Commune and the Germans, besides which, anything which tended to aggravate the position of France could only be pleasing to Bismarck. In any case, however, there was no mention of friendliness for the insurrection in Schlotheim's letter.

The Committee's Delegate for Foreign Affairs, the ineffable Paschal Grousset, speedily answered the German commander, saying that as the Revolution which had been effected in Paris by the Central Committee had an exclusively municipal character, it was in no wise of an aggressive nature for the German armies. And he added: "We are not qualified to discuss the preliminaries of peace voted by the Assembly of Bordeaux." Yet, merely a few weeks earlier, how bitterly those same preliminaries had been denounced by the Committee and its partisans! *

There were other interesting incidents on that same March 23. One of the Parisian mayors gave publicity to a letter from Thiers, stating that the electors would be called upon to elect new local municipalities on April 3, and that the Government would not prosecute the National Guards who had been led astray. Admiral Saisset

* In one of its proclamations, issued about the time of the correspondence which I have quoted, the Committee went so far as to declare that it was "firmly resolved to respect the conditions of peace." It was, of course, anxious to secure the forbearance of the German troops.

also issued a statement to the effect that the Government would grant a full municipal franchise and the selection by vote of all the officers of the National Guard, including its chief commander. The law respecting the payment of bills of exchange would also be modified, and a measure dealing liberally with the rent question would be submitted to the Assembly. These assurances tended to calm many people's minds, but the Committee was still intent on securing possession of the town-halls held by the loyalists, as was shown by its debates, and it was also steadily proceeding with its arbitrary requisitions of bread, cheese, and other articles of food. I recollect that we suddenly ran short of bread in our neighbourhood—the Élysée quarter—and were told that a large quantity had been requisitioned of the bakers, who, moreover, had unfortunately failed to secure fresh supplies of flour, as the carts conveying it had been seized *en route* for the purpose of forming fresh barricades. We were garrisoned, so to say, at this time by an evil-looking band of fellows who had descended on us from the farther part of Batignolles, and who invariably scowled at every *bourgeois* looking person whom they perceived.

In the districts held by the loyalists the tendency to resist the Committee seemed for a moment to become yet more pronounced. The young men of the École Polytechnique joined the "Friends of Order"; the little foreign legion called "Les Amis de la France," which had behaved very creditably during the siege, also declared for the Government—in fact, the foreigners on the side of the Committee and the Commune—perhaps fifteen hundred, all told, for the stories of their great numbers were gross exaggerations—were mostly mere riff-raff.

Already on March 23 the Committee had postponed the election of the Commune until Sunday, the 26th, and in the interval the local mayors and the deputies remaining in the city made final attempts at conciliation. There were deputations from the loyalists to the Committee, and from the Committee to the loyalists, and more or less stormy interviews ensued. At one moment there really seemed to be a prospect of some arrangement on the basis that the elections should take place under the supervision of the regularly constituted municipalities. A part of the Hôtel-de-Ville, also, was to have been occupied by the latter's representatives, in return for which concession certain points held by the loyalists were to have been surrendered to the insurgents. However, the Committee, following its usual course, falsified the text of a manifesto signed by the deputies and mayors, held a stormy sitting at which Assi declared the former to be "ferocious imbeciles," and the latter "rascals," and then amid cries of "Vive la Commune!" declared all agreement at an end.

Undoubtedly there was great confusion at the moment, and each side suspected and distrusted the other. There was no real certainty, moreover, whether the Government would recognize the elections even if they were conducted by the regular municipalities. It at least seems certain that Thiers did not wish the elections to take place so soon as March 26. In fact, it has been held that his policy was procrastination, in order that he might have time to collect really imposing military forces and then dictate his own terms. However that may be, whilst everything was, so to say, trembling in the balance, the Parisian loyalists were accused of fortifying

the town-halls which they occupied, and of placing cannon outside them. This at once roused the ire of the Committee, and Assi and Bergeret declared for immediate civil war.

But there were numerous dissensions among the Committee men themselves. On March 24 Bergeret was entrusted with the execution of all military orders; but on the 25th the *Journal Officiel* announced that the chief military powers in Paris had been conferred on Generals Brunel, Eudes, and Duval, pending the arrival in Paris of General Garibaldi who was to be the generalissimo! At this moment Raoul du Bisson, the Chief-of-Staff, was arrested and sent to prison as a suspect for having written to Versailles; and a like fate fell upon the conceited and till lately powerful Lullier, who, according to one account, was regarded as a traitor because he desired that the Committee should come to terms with the deputies and the mayors, condemned the Rue de la Paix affair, and wished (so it was alleged) to make the imprisoned Chanzy dictator. There was, however, another version of the affair, to the effect that after imbibing too freely at *déjeuner*, Lullier began to threaten the Committee men, declaring that he had the support of 150,000 Guards and could therefore speedily get rid of them if he chose. In lieu thereof, he was at once arrested, whereupon he made a vain attempt to throw himself out of one of the windows of the Hôtel-de-Ville.

That edifice was now crowded with Guards and crammed full of provisions. Its commander, Valligrane, being regarded with suspicion, like so many others, was suspended and replaced by a more trusty officer. Two members of the Committee, Billioray and Chouteau, were also arrested as

Bonapartists, but speedily acquitted; though another named Ganier, who had absconded, was found guilty and condemned by default to death. Meantime, Gustave Flourens, with whom I shall deal at some little length hereafter, resigned his Belleville command, which was accepted. Lafont, Clemenceau's assessor at the town-hall of Montmartre, being denounced as yet another suspect, Raoul Rigault, who at this moment styled himself Civil Delegate at the ex-Prefecture of Police, ordered that he should be arrested and his residence searched for compromising papers. Thus distrust was rampant on all sides. As the day fixed for the elections approached, the Committee seemed to become more and more anxious respecting its own safety. Even the flotilla of little gunboats, which had originated during the siege, was got together just off the Pont Neuf, and placed in the charge of "Admiral" Gouhier, who, being a Committee man himself, was probably deemed trustworthy.

All sorts of proclamations and manifestoes were still appearing. Not a day elapsed without adding to their number. The three new commanders of Paris, Eudes, Brunel, and Duval, declared to the citizens: "The time for parliamentary devices has past. One must act and severely punish the enemies of the Republic. All who are not with us are against us!" Then Citizens Cournet, Delescluze, and Razoua revealed their prescience by asserting in a manifesto which they drafted conjointly, that the Assembly was about to "overthrow Thiers, replace him by the Duc d'Aumale, and afterwards enthrone the Comte de Paris."* Next Citizen

* It is of course quite true that at a much later date, May, 1873, the Assembly did overthrow Thiers and that the Presidency was offered to

SOME MEN OF THE COMMUNE (II).

1. *Yaroslav Dombrowski.* 2. *Meunier.*
3. *Razona.* 4. *Tony Moilin.*

Ranc, ex-deputy and ex-mayor, sometime Chief of Police to Gambetta during the latter's dictatorship in the provinces, issued a proclamation in favour of constitutional courses; whereas Félix Pyat, the old conspirator, supported the Committee, and exclaimed: "Electors! To your ballot-boxes! or, as Henriot said during the great Revolution, To your guns!" In addition, moreover, to all the appeals and protests placarded on the walls of Paris, there were the innumerable diatribes and *canards* appearing in the extremist press. Vermesch, reverting in the *Père Duchêne* to the affair of the Rue de la Paix, declared that if the Vicomte de Mollinet had been shot on that occasion it was simply because he had attempted to murder some of the National Guards; whilst Jules Vallès disseminated in the *Cri du Peuple* a report that General Ducrot, the provisional commander of the Army of Versailles, had just been put to death by his own indignant soldiers!

Thus the fateful 26th of March drew near. What would be the result of the elections? Who would be chosen as members of the Commune? Virtually all the Committee men were candidates, and virtually all of them hoped to be elected. Nonetheless, they were very anxious, for defeat might fall on them. Criminals are generally uneasy in their minds, and these men had crimes upon their consciences —the tragedy of the Rue des Rosiers, that also of the Rue de la Paix, for both of which they had publicly accepted responsibility in their own official

the Duc d'Aumale, who declined it. On the other hand, the Comte de Paris withdrew all claim to the throne in favour of the Comte de Chambord, "head of the House of France," who might have become King but for his rejection of the tricolour flag.

journal. And many people, who had not been deceived by their asseverations respecting those affairs, might well refuse to vote for men who had at least condoned and attempted to justify murder. If, however, reaction should triumph at the polls, the Committee was determined to resist it at the barricades, and thus almost on the eve of the election it appointed a sub-Committee of Vigilance, composed of Assi, Cluseret, Bergeret, Henry, Babick, Avoine *fils*, Avrial, Maljournal, Duval, and Geresme. It was this Vigilance Committee which, when the mayors, at the eleventh hour, asked that the compromise momentarily agreed upon might be carried into effect, formally declared it to be null and void, adding that the elections would take place on the morrow without the participation of the so-called regular authorities. That same day Admiral Saisset quitted Paris, after authorizing the loyalist guards to disband themselves. On returning to Versailles he declared that he had not secured sufficient support to be able to resist the insurgent forces with any real prospect of success. Thus, to all appearance, the Central Committee remained for the moment master of the situation.

IV

SOME MEN OF THE TIME

The Elections for the Commune—The Arrest of Blanqui—The Commune Proclaimed—Charles Beslay and his Career—Jules Allix—Charles Amouroux—Arnaud, Arnold and Arnould—Babick—Generals Bergeret and Brunel—Billioray and Blanchet—Chalain, Champy and Chardin—Clémence and the three Cléments—The great Cluseret—Courbet of the Column—Cournet the Polite—Delescluze the Commune's Robespierre—Demay, Dereure, Decamps, the Duponts, and Durand—General Eudes—Ferré the Firebrand—Fortuné and Franckel—Gambon the "Cowboy"—The two Gérardins—Geresme—Paschal Grousset, the Diplomatic "Nut"—Johannard the Billiard Player—Jourde the Financier—Langevin—Ledroit and Lefrançais—Lonclas, Longuet, Lebeau and Vésinier.

APART from one or two somewhat riotous incidents at Montmartre, there were no disturbances in Paris on March 26 when the Commune was elected. In some parts of the city, Montmartre, Belleville, La Villette, the Faubourg du Temple, the Hôtel-de-Ville, and the Pantheon districts, the voters were numerous, but such was not the case elsewhere. At the plebiscitum taken by the National Defence Administration during the siege, 375,000 electors had gone to the poll, whereas only 180,000 took part in the election of the Commune. As I previously mentioned, thousands of people had lately quitted the city, and many of those who still remained were not disposed to participate in the appointment of an illegal Assembly. The Central Committee itself could scarcely be congratulated on the results

of the election, for only fourteen of its forty members were chosen to form part of the new Government. On the other hand, many rival revolutionists now came to the front, and their triumph was celebrated in a pastoral kind of article which Jules Vallès wrote for his journal *Le Cri du Peuple*, whilst Vermesch produced in *Le Père Duchêne* an effusion replete with disgusting words intended to emphasize his great personal satisfaction.

Three of the twenty arrondissements of Paris chose Conservatives to represent them, two returned men who favoured conciliatory courses between the capital and the regular Government, whilst in the other fifteen districts, Socialists, Jacobins, and other extremists were as a rule triumphant. However, four-and-twenty of the elected men either refused to sit, or remained absent from Paris, or else resigned their seats after the first few days.* Old Blanqui, although elected both at Montmartre and at Ménilmontant, was never able to take his seat, as, like some other emissaries, he had gone to stir up the south of France, and was indeed attempting to do so when he was arrested and consigned to the Fort du Taureau at Toulon. Moreover, although an audacious young impostor masqueraded for a time in Paris as Menotti Garibaldi and announced the early arrival of his illustrious father, the Italian Liberator, the latter did not condescend to come to Paris. Among the prominent men who refused election were Edmond Adam, Jules Ferry, Méline and Tirard. Those who promptly resigned included

* In some districts there were not enough votes to make certain elections valid. To be successful, a candidate was required to poll at least one-eighth of the total number of votes recorded, but there were often too many candidates, and none of them secured the required eighth.

Marmottan, Ranc, and Ulysse Parent. In the result, as some men would not sit at all and others resigned, whilst yet others, like Delescluze and Arthur Arnould, were elected in more than one arrondissement, complementary elections had to be held in the middle of April.

The Central Committee did not finally lay down its powers until March 29, those of its members who had been unsuccessful at the elections on the 26th exerting themselves during the interval to obtain good billets under the new *régime*. On the 29th the Commune was formally proclaimed on the Place de l'Hôtel-de-Ville, which was then crowded with National Guards and spectators. As the sight of a monarch would have been offensive, the equestrian basrelief of Henry of Navarre above the entrance to the municipal building was covered with red drapery, more of which decorated a stand on which the members both of the Commune and of the Central Committee took their places.

Few of them were good-looking, but they had exerted themselves to appear imposing. The members of the Commune wore red scarves with gold tassels, and red rosettes with pendant ribbons fringed with gold; whilst the Committee men had red scarves with silver fringe, and triangular decorations hanging from red and black ribbons. Many of them, of course, were in uniform as officers of the National Guard, and seemed to be very proud of all the gold braid which decorated their sleeves. Speeches were made, the election returns as published in the *Journal Officiel* were read aloud, an artillery salute was fired, the National Guards hoisted their *képis* on their bayonets and shouted "Vive la Commune!" till they were hoarse, whereupon bands of music

struck up in turn the "Marseillaise," the "Chant du Départ," and the "Chant des Girondins." There had been some talk of issuing an edict to compel people to illuminate their residences that evening, but for one or another reason the idea was abandoned. The illuminations were reserved for a later date—when the palaces of Paris blazed on both sides of the Seine.

At the first sitting of the Commune the chair was taken by Charles Beslay, the oldest of all the members. It was arranged, chiefly because these men were very jealous of one another, that there should be no permanent President, but that a chairman should be selected at each successive sitting. Further, it was agreed that there should be ten small committees, each with some particular department in charge; and it was deemed reasonable that each member should receive, in return for his services, a daily stipend of fifteen francs (12*s.*). That was certainly a moderate figure, and, indeed, moderation was the rule at the Commune's inaugural sitting—the venerable Beslay then delivering a speech which was received with approval even by the Conservative press. One passage in it attracted great attention. "The Republic," said Beslay, "is no longer what it was in the great days of our Revolution. The Republic of 1793 was a soldier, who had to centralise all the powers of the country in his hands, in order that he might prevail both in France and beyond it. But the Republic of 1871 is a workman, who, in particular, requires liberty in order that peace may be rendered fruitful. Peace and Work! In them behold our future, the certainty of our recovery and our social regeneration!"

Those sentiments were quite praiseworthy, but

unfortunately they did not prevail among the bulk of Beslay's fellow-members, and he, who had joined the Commune simply in order to promote the cause of municipal liberty, soon found that he possessed but little influence. His career had been an interesting one. Born at Dinan in Brittany in July, 1795 (and therefore in his seventy-sixth year at the time of the election of the Commune), he had begun life as an engineer, the canal from Nantes to Brest being his work. His father had been a deputy under Napoleon, the Bourbons, and Louis-Philippe, and he himself entered the Chamber in the time of the last-named sovereign. Then, after '48, he became a commissary of the Republic, established an engine-factory in Paris, failed in business, tried to start a bank, took to journalism, initiated subscriptions to pay the fines inflicted on writers under the Empire, and when the Franco-German war began desired to enlist as a soldier.

Of all the Commune's members Beslay was perhaps the most moderate. Appointed to the Finance Committee, and chosen as Delegate to the Bank of France, he was largely instrumental in saving that institution, first from pillage, and secondly from destruction by fire. When his colleagues decided to pull down Thiers's house, Beslay protested and resigned. Later, he vainly tried to save one of the hostages, Gustave Chaudey, the journalist. These things were known to everybody, and so it came to pass that when the insurrection was crushed no proceedings were taken against Beslay. In fact, the Government gave him a *laisser-passer* in order that he might leave France. He died at Neufchâtel in Switzerland some seven years afterwards.

There were often curious and interesting features in the lives of the members of the Commune. Jules Allix, whom I mentioned in my previous book * in connection with the women's clubs started about the time of the siege of Paris, was a quaintly eccentric individual renowned as the inventor of a system of private telegraphy by means of so-called "sympathetic snails." A Vendéen by birth, he had been mixed up in the Opéra Comique and Hippodrome plots against the life of Napoleon III, thereby incurring a sentence of eight years' banishment. Under the Commune he was at the head of the Élysée arrondissement where I was living, and he behaved there in so extraordinary a manner that early in May the Commune itself gave orders for his removal and arrest.

Charles Amouroux, who belonged to the Hôtel-de-Ville district, was a hatter—in fact, the mad hatter of the Commune, notorious for his violent and foolish speeches which under the Empire had brought repeated sentences of imprisonment upon him. Leaving the capital immediately after March 18, he was instrumental in fomenting the insurrection of the Commune of Lyons, which, however, collapsed in a few days' time, whereupon he returned to Paris and served on the "Foreign Affairs" Committee of the Commune. His slovenly-looking and elderly colleague, Jules Andrieu, who was short and had lost an eye, had been a clerk at the Hôtel-de-Ville under the Empire, and had written a book on the Middle Ages, besides compiling a volume of famous love-songs. He distinguished himself under the Commune by signing some of the requisitions for

* See "My Days of Adventure."

petroleum when so many of the public buildings of Paris were committed to the flames.

The insurgent *régime* included among its leaders an Arnaud, an Arnold, and an Arnould. The first-named, a native of Limoges, had been employed by various railway companies which he ended by attacking in the press, afterwards becoming prominent as a member of the International. He acted as one of the Commune's secretaries. Tall and ponderous, with tow-like hair, his chief characteristic was a fervent belief in spirit-rapping, somnambulism, and crystal-gazing. He was, in fact, the Commune's Sludge. Arnold, a tall fellow of thirty, came from the north of France, and after studying at the Art School of Lille, had competed for, but failed to win the Grand Prix de Rome for Architecture. He thereupon became an inspector of public-works in Paris. Arrogant and vindictive, harbouring for one or another reason resentment against several of his colleagues, he tried to induce Rossel, the Delegate at War, to overthrow the Commune, and on failing in that endeavour turned against Rossel and helped to secure an order for his arrest.

Arthur Arnould was a more interesting man than either of the foregoing. Born at Dieuze in the department of the Meurthe in April, 1833, he had a distinguished father—a professor of foreign languages at the Collège de France. Short but vivacious, with a springy walk, long hair and a remarkably high forehead, Arnould was also distinctly clever. Taking to journalism, he contributed in turn to Hugo's organ *Le Rappel* and Rochefort's journal, *La Marseillaise*, his articles, directed mainly against the Empire, gradually becoming more and more violent and thereby procuring him increasing

popularity among the Parisian working-classes, who at the elections for the Commune, returned him in various constituencies. He proved, however, one of the moderates of the new *régime*, served on the Foreign Affairs Committee, protested against the establishment of a Committee of Public Safety, and soon afterwards resigned. When the end came, he managed to escape, and after the Amnesty of 1880, was able to return to France, where, under the pseudonym of A. Matthey (in reality his wife's name), he won quite a reputation as a writer of sensational novels, such as "Le Duc de Kandos," "Les Noces d'Odette," and "Zoé Chien-chien." He also wrote an account of the Commune which is not particularly reliable.

Augustin Avrial, who represented the Popincourt district in the Commune, was a journeyman engineer from Gascony, who inherited a little income from his parents. During the Empire he was prosecuted for participating in some of the Paris riots and dabbling in the affairs of the International. In the Commune's time he became a Chef-de-Légion of the National Guard, and fought with his friend Eudes at the Meudon sortie. Defeat cost him his command, but he ultimately became Director-General of the Commune's artillery. He was killed whilst defending the Château d'Eau barricade during the Week of Bloodshed.

Allix, as I have said, was eccentric, his colleague Babick—or to give him his real name, Babicki, for he was of Polish extraction—was in some respects quite a lunatic. By trade he was a perfumer, carrying on business in the Rue de Nemours; and having studied chemistry in that connection, he tried to devise various scientific schemes for exterminating

the Germans, and for blowing up the whole of Paris in case of necessity. He professed, however, a strange religion (*la religion fusionniste*), invented by a certain M. de Toureil, and compounded, more or less, of every religion under the sun ; and he described himself on the invoices printed for his perfumery-business as an *Enfant du règne de Dieu.* Babick was very fond of delivering orations at funerals and haunting cemeteries, where he claimed that he carried on private conversations with the great departed—notably the famous Père Enfantin, one of the founders of the Saint-Simonian sect. With his solemn-looking face, his long grey beard, and his bushy eyebrows, Babick himself posed as a kind of apostle. Nevertheless, he evinced some moderation and good sense, first on the Central Committee and later on the Commune itself. He was, for instance, one of those who supported Cremer in his efforts for the release of General Chanzy.

At the time of the Commune's advent Jules Bergeret was regarded as one of its most competent military men, although he had had no training whatever in that respect, having begun life as a stable-lad at Saint Germain-en-Laye and afterwards securing work in the printing trade. An accident prevented him from riding, and when he set out to attack Versailles in April he had to travel in a carriage. About forty years of age, he was thin and bilious-looking, with jet black hair. Of all the insurgents he showed himself perhaps the most energetic at the affair of the Place Pigalle on March 18, when he prevailed on many of the soldiers to fraternize with the Guards. But he afterwards failed both in the attempted march on Versailles and in the endeavour to prevent the regular army from

taking Neuilly, after which last disaster Cluseret, then Delegate at War, replaced him by Dombrowski. Bergeret in his wrath thereupon tried to stir up the National Guard against Cluseret and Dombrowski, but was arrested and remained in durance for several days. When he had apologized and expressed his readiness to obey orders, he was allowed to resume his seat as a member of the Commune, and appointed to the War Committee, in which post he successfully undermined Cluseret's position and secured his arrest. A little later Bergeret was instructed to apprehend Cluseret's successor, Rossel, who, however, contrived to escape; and Delescluze, on taking Rossel's place as War Delegate, virtually extinguished Bergeret by appointing him to the command of some reserves at the Palais Bourbon. It was thus that things went on during the Commune, when some members were constantly conspiring against others, securing, perhaps, some brief advantage, and then incurring a serious defeat.

Another curious character of the time was Billioray, one of the Montparnasse representatives, whom I often heard ranting at the Clubs. It used to be said that he had formerly been an organ-grinder, but that was a mistake, for he was simply a prototype of some of the Futurist painters of to-day. With a pale face and an ugly squint, Billioray was the son of a disreputable woman of Villefranche in Beaujolais, and had never known his father's name. Somehow or other, when he was a youth and half-starving, he secured employment from Rosa Bonheur, mixed colours for her, cleaned her brushes, and occasionally served as a model. His duties in her studio inspired him with the idea of becoming an artist himself, and he ended by exhibiting

specimens of his work at the Salon des Réfusés, in the company of Manet and others. But he certainly did not possess a tithe of the talent shown by Manet. Having to get a living somehow or other, he at last ran away with a girl belonging to a respectable family, married her, and thenceforth persecuted her people for money, drinking hard the while, and generally leading a disreputable life. At the public clubs, where I often saw him, he was conspicuous by reason of his gaudy waistcoats and neckties. Under the Commune he became a member of the Committee of Public Safety—in which post he succeeded Delescluze, who wished to confine himself to his War duties—and besides signing some of the very last proclamations he became involved in the firing of the public buildings of Paris.

The so-called Louis Blanchet, a thin, black-bearded, and loud-voiced individual, slightly paralysed, unable to walk except with the aid of a stick, secured election in the Quartier Latin. But he had more enemies than friends, and it was presently discovered that his real name was Stanislas Pourille, that he had begun life as a novice in a Capuchin convent, had afterwards given lessons to children, and had then secured a situation as secretary to one of the commissaries of police at Lyons. This last revelation was too much for the members of the Commune. There was no room among them for a man who had served in the police of the hated Empire, and so Blanchet, *alias* Pourille, was promptly consigned to the prison of Mazas.

I have already spoken more then once of "General" Brunel.* His case was that of a man who had lost caste, for he belonged to a highly

* See pp. 49, 79, 80, *ante*.

respectable Burgundian family, and had been a Lieutenant in the Chasseurs d'Afrique. With a handsome face and a good figure, he had the typical appearance of the dashing Algerian officers of the Second Empire, and he served "under two flags," both the tricolour and the red. At the time of the war with Germany Brunel was about forty years old, and no longer belonged to the regular army, having misallied himself by his marriage with a good-looking servant-girl of the Fould family. The siege of Paris, however, gave him the command of a battalion of National Guards, and he joined a certain Lieutenant Piazza in an attempt to prevent the capitulation of the city by seizing several of the forts and refusing to surrender them to the Germans. Both men were arrested and court-martialled for this affair, but escaped conviction on the main charges, being merely sent to prison for assuming ranks which did not belong to them. They were delivered by their partisans, however, and Brunel then became an active conspirator against the Government. The Central Committee made him a General, and though he was elected to the Commune he chiefly confined himself to his military duties on the south side of Paris. He was brave, but had no talent for command.

Some writers on the Commune have asserted that he shot several young men for refusing to serve it, and that he was mixed up in the conflagrations at the finish. However that may be, the victorious soldiers found him in his wife's flat in the Rue de la Paix during the Bloody Week, and as he attempted to resist arrest drove him into the street and there shot him. I may add that Mme. Brunel practised fortune-telling and somnambulism,

and had at one time a good *clientèle* among the great ladies of the Empire. Subsequently she was often visited by members of the Commune, who were anxious to ascertain what would be the result of their desperate adventure. She might at least have warned her husband of his approaching fate.

Louis Chalain, a tall, sturdy coppersmith and an adherent of the International, was one of the minor members of the Commune, a man of no ideas and possessed of merely rudimentary knowledge. Champy was but a youth, a talkative *gamin*. Chardin, a corpulent, middle-aged plumber and metal-worker, became military commander of the Prefecture of Police, and was shot outside that building by the Government troops. Adolphe Clémence, who disappeared at the end of the insurrection, was, for his part, a well-educated and clever man who ought never to have abandoned the quiet paths of literature for the thorny brakes of politics. He was the author of a very interesting book, "Les Expositions de l'Industrie de 1798 à 1862," and had also edited a review. When it was decided that Thiers's house should be demolished, Clémence asked for the appointment of a Committee to superintend the safe removal of all the works of art there. He was in no wise responsible for their ultimate destruction.

Three Cléments were members of the Commune. One of them, a journeyman bootmaker—who came to England after the *coup d'état*, but returned to France, plotted against the Empire, and then sought permission to serve it even as a police-spy—figured among the chief apologists of the assassination of Generals Thomas and Lecomte. Raoul Rigault, however, discovered his *dossier* at the Prefecture of Police, and on finding that he had intrigued with

the officials of the Empire, had him arrested a short time before the Government troops entered Paris. It was supposed that he perished in the fire at the Prefecture. Another Clément (Victor), who looked like a sacristan, but followed the calling of a dyer—for which reason perhaps he dyed his own hair—was a man of very mild views, who protested more than once against the Commune's violence. He served on the Financial Committee.

The third Clément (Jean Baptiste), born at Boulogne near Paris in 1837, and the son of a miller in good circumstances, had a wrinkled, parchment-like face with, however, a very gentle expression which some of his actions belied, for he insisted on closing the Paris churches (unless indeed they were to be used for the accommodation of clubs) and ruled Montmartre with a despotic hand in conjunction with his colleague Dereure. There were, indeed, two sides to Clément's nature, as one might judge by his position in the Commune, for he belonged both to the Education and to the Ammunition Committees. By avocation he was a journalist and a song-writer, and some of his songs were really pretty ones. His first success, perhaps, was with *Les Petites Bonnes de chez Duval*, in celebration of the neat-handed waitresses at the Bouillons Duval; but his best effort was certainly *Le Temps des Cerises*, which ultimately went the round of France:—

"Quand nous en serons au temps des cerises
Et gai rossignol et merle moqueur
Seront tous en fête!
Les belles auront la folie en tête,
Et les amoureux du soleil au cœur—
Quand nous en serons au temps des cerises
Sifflera bien mieux le merle moqueur.

"Mais il est bien court le temps des cerises
Quand l'on s'en va deux, cueillir en rêvant,
Des pendants d'oreilles !
Cerises d'amour en robes pareilles,
Tombant sous la feuille en gouttes de sang—
Mais il est bien court le temps des cerises,
Pendants de corail que l'on cueille à vingt ans !

"Quand vous en serez au temps des cerises,
Si vous avez peur des chagrins d'amour
Évitez les belles !
Moi qui ne crains pas les peines cruelles,
Je ne vivrai pas sans souffrir un jour—
Quand vous en serez au temps des cerises
Vous aurez aussi des peines d'amour !"

The man who could write that dainty little *romance* had no time to think of cherries during the Commune. His attention was then given chiefly to shells, cartridges, and gunpowder.

I come now to a personage of a very different stamp, the once notorious General Cluseret who survived until August, 1900. He was one of the most important characters on the stage of the Commune, and probably the most competent of all the insurgent officers. Like Jean Baptiste Clément he came into the world near the Bois de Boulogne, but at Suresnes, just across the Seine. In 1843, when he was twenty years old, he entered the Military School of St. Cyr, and five years later he became a lieutenant. Under the Republican Government of '48 he commanded a battalion of the Mobile Guard, and acted right vigorously in suppressing the June insurrection, when he attacked and carried no fewer than eleven barricades in the Quartier Latin, receiving the cross of the Legion of Honour in reward for his exploits. Later, he joined the 55th Line Regiment, fought in the Crimea, where he was twice wounded in action, went to Algeria, was attached to some

of the Arab *bureaux* there, and became an official of the permanent court-martial of Blidah. But he was afterwards struck off the army-list in connection with the mysterious purloining of a large number of soldiers' blankets, of which, at first, a quartermaster-sergeant was wrongfully accused. Cluseret then became manager of the estates of Baron Joseph de Carayon-Latour. But whilst he was acting in this capacity a whole flock of sheep disappeared as mysteriously as the blankets had done, and Cluseret's dismissal ensued.

However, he went to Sicily and served under Garibaldi, from whom, according to his own account, he received the rank of General. Next he betook himself to the United States and fought first under Frémont and afterwards under McClellan in the War of Secession. Being naturalized as an American citizen, he was made a Brigadier-General in 1862. After Lincoln's death he advocated Frémont's claims to the Presidency, and then went for a time to Mexico, returning at last to New York where he joined the Fenians. It used to be said that Cluseret was mixed up in a scheme to seize Chester Castle with a band of Fenians in February, 1867; at all events there was a great scare at Chester at the time, and troops were hastily despatched thither.

Returning to France and mixing himself up in the affairs of the International and the riots of the time, he was confronted by a warrant of arrest but protested his innocence and asserted his American nationality. Indeed, the United States Minister, General Dix, claimed him and secured his release, but insisted that he should leave France. When his friend Varlin (of the International and the Commune) was prosecuted at Blois in 1870, a letter

written by Cluseret from New York was produced, and a great deal was made of a passage which said: "The Empire will soon fall. We must be ready both physically and morally. On that day it will be ourselves or nothing! Until then I shall probably remain quiet, but when that day comes, I affirm it, and I never say yes meaning no, Paris will belong to us or Paris will cease to exist."

After the fall of Napoleon III Cluseret hurried to France, went off to Lyons, stirred up a rising there during the latter part of the war, tried to do the same at Marseilles, and, in the month of March, 1871, reappeared in Paris. Over 20,000 votes had been secured by him in the capital at the elections for the National Assembly, but that number did not suffice to make him a deputy. Nor was he returned as a member of the Commune until the complementary elections on April 16. But a fortnight previously the Commune appointed him as its Delegate at War. In disposition he was vain, ambitious, authoritative, even despotic. He had, moreover, a great contempt for his colleagues and incautiously spoke of them more than once as mere imbeciles. Further, his untruthfulness was notorious. Nevertheless, he served the Commune well, and did much to improve its military position. It is, indeed, not too much to say that the insurrection would have collapsed much sooner than it did had it not been for Cluseret's services. As Delegate at War he was far superior to his successors Rossel and Delescluze. On the occasions when I saw him during the Commune he almost invariably wore civilian dress, scorning the gold braid with which the other "Generals" were so fond of adorning themselves. It was he who decreed the *levée en*

masse of all Parisians from 19 to 45 years of age, who ordered that every one refusing to serve should be hunted down and forcibly enrolled, and, on the other hand, gave extra "campaigning pay" to all who went out of the city to fight the Versaillese.

When Mégy abandoned the fort of Issy it was Cluseret who reoccupied it, but Bergeret, having denounced him for allowing Mégy to retire, he was arrested and sent to Mazas, only securing release when the Versailles troops were entering Paris, whereupon he hastened to the front. When the hour of the reprisals came a priest gave Cluseret an asylum, and kept him concealed for five months, when he at last contrived to escape to England. He was condemned to death by default in 1872, and remained abroad, dabbling in painting, for which he had a little talent, until the Amnesty of 1884 enabled him to return to France. Somewhat later, a new career began for this remarkably adventurous man. He was repeatedly elected to the Chamber of Deputies as a member for the department of the Var, and sat among the socialist working-class party. He played, however, no great part in politics, but beguiled his time by writing on alimentary questions. He was in his seventy-eighth year when he died near Toulon in 1900.

Great was the contrast between Cluseret and Frédéric Cournet. The former was curt, uncivil in his manner, but the latter was perhaps the most urbane, the most courteous of the Commune's members. One might almost call him its Angelo Cyrus Bantam, for he had been a master of ceremonies. Some interest attached to his parentage, for he was the son of a naval lieutenant, who took to revolutionary courses and fought among the very

insurgents whom Cluseret mowed down in June, 1848. Cournet senior, however, escaped to England, and in October, 1852, was killed by a fellow exile named Emmanuel Barthélemy, in a duel fought on Englefield Green near Egham. Barthélemy was an engineer who in June '48 had commanded at the Faubourg Saint-Antoine barricade, whilst Cournet at the same date was in charge of the barricade in the Faubourg du Temple. An English jury acquitted Barthélemy of murdering Cournet, but found him guilty of manslaughter, for which he received only a slight sentence. Three years later, however, he was convicted of murdering a Mr. Moore, a soda-water manufacturer of Warren Street, Fitzroy Square, under somewhat mysterious circumstances, and in due course was hanged by Calcraft.

Cournet junior, who was born at Lorient, became at first a commercial traveller, then went to sea for a short time, returned and acted as a railway clerk, and next secured employment as master of the ceremonies at the Casino of Arcachon, where on ball-nights he welcomed the beauties of Bordeaux and introduced them to suitable partners. He dabbled also in journalism both at Bordeaux and in Paris, where he took to politics and incurred various sentences for press offences. He was charged at the State trial at Blois in 1870 with inciting people to murder the Emperor, but protested so indignantly and ably that the jury acquitted him. During the siege of Paris he became an officer in the National Guard, and was afterwards elected as a deputy, but foolishly resigned that position in order to join the Commune of which he had also been chosen a member. He was one of the Delegates at the Prefecture of Police, and in spite of his polished

manners did not hesitate to carry out some of the Commune's most abominable decrees. He was ultimately denounced, however, as a suspect, and Raoul Rigault ordered his arrest, which he contrived to avoid. Like a good many other Communards, he also managed to escape abroad when the day of reckoning arrived.

Gustave Courbet, peasant-like in appearance, puffed out with beer, good-humoured, simple-minded and yet very conceited, was one of the curiosities of the Commune. How a great artist, such as he was, could have consented to join the band of the Hôtel-de-Ville amazed many of his contemporaries. The story that he positively hated the Vendôme column and became a member of the Commune for the one express purpose of seeing it pulled down, is merely a ridiculous legend, and one may assume that foolish vanity alone led Courbet to accept the honour thrust upon him. Born at Ornans in the Doubs department in 1819, he was sent to Paris to study law, but turned his attention to art. His "realistic" principles and methods in that field did not appeal to the critics, who for many years attacked and censured his work unsparingly. That he was a great painter, however, is certain, and I can remember the deep impression produced by some of his pictures—such as *La Remise des Chevreuils* and the *Enterrement à Ornans*. It was Proudhon who inoculated Courbet with republicanism and socialism, and his hostility to the Empire was fully shown when he curtly refused to accept from it the decoration of the Legion of Honour in recognition of his artistic merits. A confirmed bachelor, he took his meals, I recollect, at the Pension Lavaur near his studio in the Rue des Poitevins, and was

often to be seen there, hobnobbing with Gill, the caricaturist, and such revolutionary writers at Vallès and Vermesch. It was they and others of their stamp who drew Courbet into the vortex of the Commune. Arrested at that *régime's* downfall, he was condemned to six months' imprisonment and the payment of a fine of £60. His last years were spent in Switzerland, where he died in 1877.

There were two chief parties among the Communards, a Socialist one, some of whose adherents were affiliated to the International, and a Jacobin one, led by Charles Delescluze. He was born at Dreux in 1809, and was the son of a former sergeant in the forces of the first Republic. For the most part self-educated, he came to Paris to study law, became acquainted, like Courbet, with Proudhon, and was made a Commissary of the Republic in Northern France after the Revolution of 1848. He was then at least privy to a ridiculous attempt to march on Brussels and annex Belgium. Returning to Paris he allied himself with Ledru-Rollin, and participated in all the agitation which hastened the fall of the Republic. To escape a sentence of ten years' transportation, he at last fled to England, but returned to France in connection with a secret society, this ending in another sentence of four years' imprisonment. He then had some terrible experiences at Toulon, Brest, Lambessa, Devil's Island, and Cayenne, but recovered his liberty in 1859.

Nine years later Delescluze established in Paris a newspaper called *Le Reveil*, in which he started a subscription for a monument to Deputy Baudin, who had been killed during Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état*. On being prosecuted he selected Gambetta (then virtually a briefless barrister) to defend him,

and it was this which first brought Gambetta to the front. After the fall of the Empire Delescluze intrigued repeatedly against the National Defence Government, and helped largely to bring about the Commune.

In a previous book of mine ("Republican France") I wrote of him as follows: "Of the medium height, thin, angular, with a cold metallic stare, like a man haunted by a fixed idea, Delescluze had a resolute walk, always going straight to his destination without glancing either to right or left. His hair and beard, once red, were of a dingy white; a number of little sanguineous spots speckled his yellowish, hard, unflinching, wrinkled face, which never smiled. Perhaps he would have been an inquisitor had he lived in the Middle Ages. Born, however, not long after the great Revolution, he had chosen Robespierre and St. Just as his masters, and used with a kind of mystical fervour the language employed by the Incorruptible Dictator of 1793. . . . His manners were fastidious like those of his patron Robespierre. Like the latter, too, he was careful in his attire. He invariably wore a silk hat, a frock-coat, and patent-leather boots—being the only member of the Commune who assumed those habiliments common to the hated *bourgeoisie*. Implacable, never forgiving, never forgetting, he was also courageous. When the Commune was expiring in the bullet-swept streets of Paris, he quitted the town hall of the 11th Arrondissement, where he had installed himself as War Delegate, and went straight to a barricade on the Boulevard Voltaire, near the Place de la République. He wore his usual garments, but had a red sash about his waist, and carried his favourite gold-headed cane. On his way

Some Men of the Commune (III).

1. *Dereure.*
2. *Fontaine.*
3. *A. Dupont.*
4. *E. Protot.*

he met some of his confederates, Lissagaray, Jourde, Jaclard, Lisbonne, who was badly wounded, and Vermorel, who was shot mortally before his eyes. On reaching the barricade I have mentioned, Delescluze climbed it amid the hail of bullets raining from the troops in the distance, and prepared for death. It came swiftly: in another moment he fell to the ground lifeless, shot in the head and in the chest." I shall often have occasion to mention him in the course of this present narrative.

There is nothing particular to be said of Delescluze's colleague Demay, an old Socialist stone-cutter and sculptor. Simon Dereure was a more interesting figure. He had begun life as a bootmaker, but Rochefort had appointed him to be manager of his journal *La Marseillaise*, this necessitating that he should "do time" whenever sentence of imprisonment followed some breach of the Press Law. In the days of the Empire mere men of straw were generally chosen to act as the managers of opposition papers. They were paid on an average £200 a year, and their chief duty was to spend a part of their time in the prison of Sainte-Pélagie, where, on the whole, they lived fairly comfortably, being allowed to see visitors at least once a week and to have all their meals sent to them from outside. Their position was akin to that of a first-class misdemeanant under our own system. Dereure, however, eventually incurred a long sentence for conspiracy, and had been some months in prison when the Empire fell. He commanded a battalion of the National Guard during a part of the siege of Paris, used his influence to make Clemenceau Mayor of Montmartre, and became, under the Commune, first a member of the Committee of Justice, and

secondly civil delegate with the Polish General Dombrowski. He was taken prisoner by the troops and was shot on the spot.

Decamps belonged as an official to a federation of working-class societies, and took only a minor part in the insurrection. A certain A. Dupont, a good-looking man of thirty, who had been a clerk at the Crédit Foncier Bank, but who also dabbled in chemistry—taking great interest in the properties of nitro-glycerine—was appointed Chief of the Municipal Police during the Siege of Paris, and largely controlled the Detective Police of the Commune. Another Dupont (Clovis), a basket-maker of Saint Cloud, sat on the Central Committee as well as on the Commune, but never figured prominently in their affairs. Jacques Durand, a bootmaker, like so many other Communards, but also a club ranter and a great hater of priests, served with his friend Dereure on the Committee of Justice.

I come now to another General, Eudes, a Norman of three-and-thirty, who after passing his *baccalauréat* at the early age of seventeen, started to study medicine, but spent most of his time in the cafés and dancing-halls of the Quartier Latin. Like Dereure, he ended by becoming a newspaper-manager, and often went to prison for an organ called *La libre Pensée.* He was mixed up in the affray at La Villette during the last days of the Empire, and on that account was sentenced to death. Michelet and others intervened, however, and as the authorities desired to ascertain the whereabouts of Blanqui, the prime mover in the affair, Eudes was reprieved in the hope that he or his wife might reveal Blanqui's hiding-place. But they refused to do so, and at the Revolution Eudes recovered

his liberty. He abetted Blanqui in the latter's attempt to overthrow the National Defence Government during the siege, placed his sword at the disposal of the Commune, took part in the Meudon sortie in April, 1871, and having demonstrated his incapacity on that occasion was sent to command some reserves at the palace of the Legion of Honour. There he was wont to lie in bed and indulge in revolver practice, the mirrors in his room serving him as targets. Mme. Eudes in the meanwhile gave balls, or removed the palace ornaments and linen to a secret hiding-place.

Théophile Ferré, to whom the unfortunate hostages of the Commune largely owed their fate, had originally dabbled in the law as clerk to an *agent d'affaires*. Extremely short, constantly standing on tiptoes, stretching out his neck, and expressing himself in a disagreeably high-pitched voice, he suggested a truculent little bantam-cock. Long-haired, full-bearded, and near-sighted, he was afflicted with epilepsy. He was prominently connected with the Commune's police service, and sat as one of the members for Montmartre. It was he who eventually gave the order to set fire to the Ministry of Finances in the Rue de Rivoli. For that and his share in the imprisonment and murder of the hostages, he was sentenced to death and shot at Satory.

Henri Fortuné, a native of Toulouse, was a minor member of the Commune, forty years old, good-looking, with prematurely white hair, and a large dose of vanity which nothing justified, as, in spite of his intelligent appearance, he was by no means a man of parts. Leo Franckel, hook-nosed, short and lean, was probably of Jewish extraction. It was said that he had come into the world at

Buda-Pesth, but, on the other hand, he had served in the Prussian Army, and at one moment had mounted guard over Bebel and Jacoby whilst they were imprisoned in a fortress. By them he was inoculated with Socialism. After joining the International he fled to England whence he went to France on the Association's behalf. The Gobelins arrondissement chose him as a member of the Commune, and although he was undoubtedly a foreigner his election was ratified.

Gambon, of peasant birth and a native of Bourges, was celebrated for a certain cow which had once belonged to him. A deputy in '48, but a leader in the June insurrection, he was then sentenced to ten years' imprisonment, and on recovering his liberty refused to pay taxes to the authorities of the Empire. Thereupon one of his cows (he had inherited a little farm) was seized and sold by auction. Some sympathisers started a subscription, however, and the cow was repurchased and restored to Gambon. In 1871 he was elected both to the National Assembly and the Commune, and accepted from the latter a mission to fetch Garibaldi from Caprera. He managed to reach Corsica, but was arrested and temporarily detained there. On returning to Paris he joined the last Committee of Public Safety, which was so largely responsible for the conflagrations which marked the Commune's downfall.

Charles Gerardin, aged six-and-twenty, had been sentenced for conspiracy in the last days of the Empire. Under the Commune he became the friend of Rossel, and helped him to escape arrest at the hands of his former associates. Both of them, however, were afterwards arrested by the Versailles authorities, Gerardin, like many other Communards,

being taken at his mistress's lodgings. Another Gerardin—Eugène—who also figured in the Commune, was simply a grey-haired old workman, somewhat embittered by years of labour and penury. Geresme, previously known as Hubert, which may have been only a Christian name, came from Damery in Champagne and evinced very violent inclinations but little sense. His calling was said to be that of a corset-maker.

The *cocodès*, the *bel-ami*, and the "nut" of the Commune now claims attention. Let me say at once that in his later years he largely redeemed his past. Paschal Grousset was born in 1845 at Corte in Corsica, where his father was at the head of a college. Becoming a journalist when little more than twenty years old, he wrote second-rate *chroniques* for *Le Figaro* under the pseudonym of Blasius, and serial fiction to which he put the name of Virey. He contributed also semi-scientific piffle to *L'Étendard*, and yet other articles to *L'Époque*, which was run by Napoleon III's tailor, Dusautoy. That Parisian rival of Mr. Poole took an interest in Grousset because he had an extremely good figure and showed off his clothes to advantage. He certainly had a handsome face of which he was outrageously vain. Irreproachable in his linen and his gloves, he also took great care of his moustache, and his hair, as a rule, was nicely waved. His friend Henri Rochefort nicknamed him the *coiffeur*. He ended by contributing to Rochefort's journal *La Marseillaise*, and it was he who sent Fonvielle and Victor Noir as seconds to Prince Pierre Bonaparte on the occasion when the Prince fired a revolver at Noir with fatal consequences. That tragic affair, which had evil consequences for the Empire, made

Grousset known to thousands of people who had never previously heard of him, and a little journal which he himself started, *La Bouche de Fer*, secured a good many readers in the Paris *faubourgs*.

Grousset belonged in turn both to the Central Committee and to the Commune, serving one and the other as Delegate for Foreign Affairs. I mentioned him in connection with General von Fabrice's conditional declaration of neutrality.* Soon after the elections for the Commune he addressed a despatch to all the foreign envoys in France, informing them of the establishment of the "Communal Government of Paris," and expressing a desire to draw yet closer "the fraternal links already uniting the Parisian people to the people of other countries." No ambassador or minister condescended to reply to that communication, but throughout the insurrection Grousset frequently corresponded on one and another matter with the German General Von Fabrice. The letters they exchanged would doubtless make interesting reading.

Grousset voted for the overthrow of the Vendôme column, the demolition of Thiers's house, and the establishment of a Committee of Public Safety, but he does not appear to have had any share in the slaughter of the hostages. At the fall of the Commune he hid himself in the rooms of one of his mistresses, a Mlle. Accard, living in the Rue Condorcet, and on June 3 shaved off his moustache, garbed himself in one of the woman's black frocks, and had just adapted one of her false chignons to his own head when the police burst in and seized him. I was passing along the Boulevards shortly afterwards when, on approaching the Grand Hotel, I saw a

* See p. 75, *ante*.

crowd surrounding a cab and shouting: "Pull him out! Shoot him! It is Grousset!" I did not at first recognize him, so comical was his appearance in his female attire. But a general officer attended by an aide-de-camp suddenly rode up and made inquiries, with the result that some soldiers were sent for and escorted the cab on its way to Versailles.

Grousset was transported to New Caledonia, whence he escaped with Rochefort and others in 1874. For some years he resided in London, where he acquired a thoroughly good knowledge of our language. He contributed to *Le Temps* under the name of Philippe Daryl, and wrote books of travel, romances of adventure, and a whole series of volumes on school-life in different countries, as "André Laurie"—Hetzel, who became his publisher, being unwilling to issue anything bearing such a notorious name as Grousset. This, however, he ultimately resumed, being elected in 1893, and re-elected on several occasions, as deputy for the Reuilly Arrondissement of Paris. During his sojourn among us he had been greatly impressed by the physical superiority of English over French boys, and long before other Frenchmen dealt with that question he established and edited a journal called *L'Éducation Physique.* If young Frenchmen can nowadays hold their own in football, boxing, and other sports and pastimes they owe it in a measure to Paschal Grousset, the whilom semi-ridiculous "johnny" and "masher" of the Commune of Paris. One word more: It was he who made the very excellent French translation of Stevenson's *Treasure Island,* and he also introduced some of the tales of Mayne Reid and similar writers to French boys. He sat in the French

Chamber as an independent Socialist, and died in April, 1909.

Jules Johannard of Beaune, a traveller in artificial flowers, who became civil commissary with General La Cecilia, wore a glass-eye, but was none the less the best billiard player among the members of the Commune. He was also distinguished by the great quantity of gold braid which he wore on his uniform. When the Versailles troops entered Paris he shot several prisoners and then fled from the Trocadero, giving orders at every post he passed to set houses on fire and put captives and hostages to death. He was ultimately discovered crouching in the crypt of the chapel of the Fort of Vincennes, and was despatched as promptly as he himself had already despatched others. François Jourde was a man of a very different type. Tall, slim, full-bearded, and very intelligent, he was an Auvergnat by birth, had studied at the Collège Turgot, and served as a notary's clerk and a bank cashier before going into the cotton trade on his own account. The questions in which he delighted were mathematical and economical ones, and he became the Commune's Chief Financial Delegate, in which capacity he co-operated with Beslay in saving the Bank of France from pillage. Large sums passed through Jourde's hands during the Commune, but he was personally very honest, and he accounted for all he received. Like Rochefort and Grousset, he escaped from New Caledonia whither he was transported, and after living for a time in Switzerland and Brussels he returned to France. He died at Nice in 1893, when he was in his sixtieth year.

Like Jourde, Camille Langevin, a metal-worker and former Internationalist, protested against the

creation of a Committee of Public Safety, declaring that any such dictatorial institution would be incompatible with a democratic *régime* like the Commune. Langevin was one of those members who gave their time principally to their respective districts. Charles Ledroit, who was said to have served a term of hard labour at the *bagne* of Toulon, was chosen, appropriately enough, as a member of the Commune's Committee of Justice. Lefrançais, a native of Angers, middle-aged, short and broad, with bright eyes and a complexion suggestive of apoplexy, had been a schoolmaster, a clerk, a conspirator, and a public speaker. Withal, he was disinterested and courageous. He protested against the raids made on the Little Sisters of the Poor, whose slender funds were all distributed in charity; and, towards the end of the Commune, when others feared to command at the ramparts, Lefrançais offered to do so. Taken, sword and revolver in hand, during the street-fighting, he was summarily shot by his captors.

Sundry legends were current respecting a man named Lonclas, who was said by some folk to have been employed as a porter in a button-making factory, and by others to have kept a house of ill-fame. Lonclas was a great friend of Philippe, who, according to some writers, had "done time" at the galleys; and in the last days of the Commune the pair of them set fire to the town-hall and church of Bercy, besides attempting to destroy the great wine-stores there. As for Charles Longuet, a Norman of Caen, where his father had been in business as a manufacturer of stockings, he started as a commercial traveller, but took to journalism. At the advent of the Commune he was appointed to edit

the *Journal Officiel*, but found a certain Lebeau already installed at the offices as representative of the Central Committee. Longuet only got rid of Lebeau with difficulty, and did not long continue in his position, as some of the more educated members of the Commune complained of his bad French.* He was therefore replaced by the little hunch-back Vésinier, the "Wandering Jew of Journalism," who at one moment had acted as secretary to Eugène Sue, and at others had written filthy libels about Napoleon III and the Empress Eugénie. A particular feature of Vésinier's editorship of *Le Journal Officiel* was the sedulous manner in which he availed himself of it to boom his own writings, advertising them daily, free of charge.

* Nevertheless when he escaped to England at the fall of the Commune he contrived to earn a living by teaching French to English children. Moreover, after his return to France, he became an inspector of schools.

V

MORE MEN OF THE TIME

Benoît Malon the Socialist Historian—Martelet the Scene Painter—Léo Meillet, Lawyer—Miot the Chemist—Mortier, Ostyn and Oudet—Dr. Parisel and Dr. Pillot—Pindy, the Carpenter, and Pottier, the Decorator—Protot, Advocate and Delegate at Justice—Puget—Félix Pyat, the Conspirator who never did Time—Ranvier the Painter—Dr. Rastoul—Régère, "Vet." and Wine Broker—Public Prosecutor Rigault—Serraillier and Sicard—Theisz, the Postmaster—Tridon, Trinquet and Urbain—Édouard Vaillant—Jules Vallès—Viard—Varlin—Vermorel—Some more Communalist Generals—Yaroslaw Dombrowski—Ladislas Dombrowski—Wroblewski—Okolowitz—La Cecilia the Linguist—Nathaniel Rossel—Gustave Flourens—Razoua, Jaclard and Ganier d'Abin—Alavoine, Camelinat, and Cavalié—Fontaine, who demolished Thiers's House—Garnier, Salvador, and Treillard—Regnard, Le Moussu, Pilotell, and Dacosta, Police Officials—Levraud and my Communalist Passport—I help Lucien Marc of *L'Illustration* to leave Paris.

CONTINUING my review of the members of the Commune I come now to Benoît Malon, who was one of its most remarkable men and whose career was closely linked with the history of European Socialism. He was born at Prétieux near Saint Étienne of needy peasant-parents, began life as a goat-herd, became a day-labourer, a porter, and finally a journeyman dyer. He was entirely self-educated, and in the midst of his toil and penury he composed poems and romances, acquired Socialist opinions, which differed in various respects from those of Karl Marx, and was very prominent among the founders of the International. Elected as a deputy after the Franco-German War, Malon voted

against the terms of peace, then (with Rochefort, Ranc, and others) resigned his seat, was chosen to be a member of the Commune, led that body's Socialist minority although he stuttered in his speech, foresaw the abyss into which his colleagues were rushing, and protested more than once against acts of violence. At the finish he managed to escape. He died at Asnières in 1893 when in his fifty-third year. No student of Socialism can afford to neglect Malon's writings.

His fellow-Communard Martelet was a young scene-painter who had made himself a name by his hostility to the National Defence Government during the siege. During the Commune he acted chiefly as a Delegate at public funerals. Léo Meillet, of whom I spoke in connection with the arrest of General Chanzy and Edmond Turquet, was the son of a Gascon baker, and had come to Paris to study law. Under the Commune he served on the Committees of Justice and Public Safety, commanded at the fort of Bicêtre, and acted as commissary with the Polish General Wroblewski, who at one period led the Communalist forces on the south side of Paris. When the end arrived Meillet hurried to M. Turquet's house and said to him: "I saved you, will you save me?" Turquet did so, giving him an asylum for a fortnight and then procuring for him a Belgian passport which enabled him to leave France. Meillet's friend Jules Miot was less fortunate. A patriarchal-looking old man, he had begun life as a pharmaceutical chemist, but drifting into politics had secured election as a deputy during the second Republic. He had no particular talents, however, and at the time of the Commune he was chiefly used by others as their instrument to suggest the

appointment of a Committee of Public Safety in which all real power was to be vested. Miot was shot when the Versailles troops entered Paris.

Mortier was a young architectural draughtsman who "went wrong" during the German siege. His one feat during the Commune was to protest against the closing of the Churches, which ought to remain open, said he, in order that lectures in favour of atheism might be delivered daily from the pulpits. Mortier's fellow-member, Ostyn, was said to be a Belgian or a German. In any case he belonged to the moderate section of the Commune. Oudet was a painter on porcelain who had been implicated in a bomb-plot against Napoleon III, and imprisoned for some years at Fontevrault. Embittered by his sufferings there and his subsequent poverty, he became a violent sectarian. He commanded on the ramparts during the Commune, and often pointed the guns of his *secteur* himself. Parisel, on the other hand, was a tall, fair young medical man, who imagined that the Commune would last for ever, became President of its Scientific Delegation and busied himself in getting together large supplies of petroleum. In previous years he had invented a repeating rifle which attracted the attention of Napoleon III. I believe that Parisel was shot when the Commune fell.

I mentioned Philippe in connection with Ledroit, and need only add that prior to the Franco-German war he carried on business as a public-house broker. Pillot was, like Parisel, a medical man, but one who had previously been a priest. His speciality was to denounce all religion and to advocate complete atheism. Louis Pindy, a rather good-looking young working-carpenter, had been very prominent in the

International. He busied himself chiefly with military affairs during the Commune. It was he, it has been said, who caused the Hôtel-de-Ville to be set on fire. On the other hand, Eugène Pottier, a paterfamilias and a talented *ornemaniste*, who had often exhibited at the Salon, was a very mild-mannered man whose chief desire was to reform the morals of the Parisians. It was at his instigation that the Commune issued a decree closing all the licensed houses of ill-fame.

With Eugène Protot, the Commune's Delegate at Justice, I became acquainted in later years, when he was earning a living as a teacher of the French language. His parents were Burgundian peasants, and he came to Paris penniless. Yet he contrived to study law and to become a member of the bar. He was mixed up in various conspiracies against the Empire, but did not come to the front until in 1870 he was called upon to defend a certain Mégy, for shooting a plain-clothes officer dead, and wounding a commissary of police. Mégy was "wanted" in connection with the so-called Blois plot, and the police attempted to arrest him before 6 a.m. in the morning, which was contrary to the law of the time, and he thereupon fired at them. On hearing that Protot was to defend Mégy, the Imperial Government (Émile Ollivier being Prime Minister) sent a commissary and two detectives to secure him also and to seize his papers. This was effected, but the whole bar of Paris protested against so outrageous a proceeding, and Protot was restored to liberty and able to defend his client, on whom, however, the High Court assembled at Blois passed a sentence of fifteen years' hard labour.* Under

* For a time Mégy defended Fort Issy for the Commune.

the Commune Protot became responsible for various arbitrary measures infringing personal liberty. At the finish he joined in the street-fighting, and during his later years his face remained badly scarred by the wounds which he then received. After the various amnesties he vainly tried to get reinstated as an advocate, but the Paris bar refused to condone his participation in the rebellion.

Puget, who had been a bankers' bookkeeper, seldom attended the sittings of the Commune, preferring to confine himself to the defence of his arrondissement—that of Passy. Félix Pyat, on the contrary, though mixed up in revolutions and conspiracies all his life, was no fighter. The son of an advocate of ultra-Royalist opinions, he came into the world in 1810 at Vierzon in Berry, and after studying law in Paris took to revolutionary ideas, his declared object being to improve the lot of the working-classes. Besides contributing largely to the press of Louis-Philippe's time, Pyat wrote a number of plays, all of which were more or less political or sociological pamphlets. His drama, "Les Deux Serruriers," which achieved wonderful success in 1841, showed him to be a strong Socialist. "Diogène," produced in 1846, added to his notoriety, and in the following year "Le Chiffonnier de Paris" set the seal upon it. All France was then preparing for Revolution, and the Parisian workmen regarded Pyat as a demi-god. In '48 he became a deputy and sat in the Assembly with the so-called "Mountain" party. In June the following year he participated in the demonstrations fomented by Ledru-Rollin against Louis Napoleon and the legislature, fled with his friend from the École des Arts et Métiers, where they had taken refuge, and escaped

abroad—both of them ultimately fixing their residence in England. In 1858 Pyat issued an apology for Orsini's attempt on Napoleon III, and on this account did not dare to return to France until some ten years later. He found his popularity greatly waning there, and exerted himself to revive it by writing newspaper articles of increasing violence.

He was to have attended a revolutionary banquet at Saint-Mandé on January 21, 1870, shortly after the assassination of Victor Noir by Prince Pierre Bonaparte, but preferred to keep away, and to send in his place his secretary Gromier, who read to the company a so-called "toast to a bullet," in which Pyat, taking as his subject the bullet which had killed Victor Noir, suggested that it might redeem its reputation by fulfilling a mission of deliverance. The effusion was so worded that nobody could really mistake its meaning. Briefly, it suggested the assassination of Napoleon III.

Bold, however, as Pyat was in his writings, he was physically a coward. During the demonstrations which attended and followed the funeral of Victor Noir, he concealed himself in a coal-barge on the Seine, and profited by the first opportunity to flee to England in order to escape prosecution for the alleged Blois plot, in connection with which he was sentenced by default to undergo five years' imprisonment and pay a fine of £240. He did not return to Paris until the Empire had fallen, whereupon, in his successive newspapers, *Le Combat* and *Le Vengeur*, he did not cease to attack the Government of National Defence.* On that account, during the latter part of the Siege of Paris he was careful

* See "My Days of Adventure."

to remain in hiding. The elections after the capitulation made him a deputy once more, and a little later he was chosen as a member of the Commune. He voted for the establishment of a Committee of Public Safety, was elected one of its members, and, then, dreading his responsibility, resigned. Further, after the suppression of a number of newspapers, a step which he had advised and commended, he seemingly became ashamed of this outrage on the liberty of the press, contrary as it was to all the principles of his life, and retired from the Commune altogether. Directly the troops entered Paris he disappeared, as was his wont, for although he was frequently involved, he was, I think, never once arrested. That fate fell only on the foolish fellows whom he incited to one or another revolutionary deed. Pyat made his way to London, was condemned to death in his absence, returned to France after the first amnesty, became a deputy for the Bouches-du-Rhône department, and died at Saint-Gratien, near Paris, in August, 1889.

His Communard colleague, Gabriel Ranvier, a tall, strong, pock-marked man of fifty, had been a decorative painter, but was ruined in that respect by a lawsuit with Goupil's house, and then frequented public meetings, political clubs, and *cabarets*. Like so many others of his stamp, Ranvier was sent to prison under the Empire, secured release at the Revolution, and then intrigued against the National Defence, becoming the *alter ego* of Gustave Flourens, who commanded the Belleville battalions. Under the Commune Ranvier devoted himself chiefly to military duties on the south side of Paris. Dr. Rastoul—who came from the Midi, had no political past, but had practised medicine in the Saint-Martin

district—was placed at the head of the Commune's ambulance service. His one proposal of any note, at the meetings held at the Hôtel-de-Ville, was that the *Journal Officiel* should be sent gratuitously to all the *régime's* adherents! Privately—when the end was approaching—Rastoul suggested to his colleagues that they should take refuge within the German lines and abandon Paris to the regular troops. When he was subsequently court-martialled, "extenuating circumstances" were found in his favour, and he was sentenced only to transportation without any extra penalties.

Transportation to a fortified place was, however, the fate of Régère, who declared at his trial that his full name was Henri Théodore Régère de Montmore. Tall, middle-aged, and very freckled, he came from the neighbourhood of Bordeaux, started in life as a veterinary surgeon, and then took to business as a wine-broker at Libourne. But he also conspired against the Empire and had to go for a time into exile. Some curious stories were told of his doings during the Commune. On one side he confided a young son of his to the care of a priest, so that the lad might be properly prepared for his "first communion," and on the other he caused the cross to be struck off the front of the Pantheon and replaced by a red flag. Further, it appears that when the street-fighting began it was Régère who sent Millière a strip of paper on which was written in English: "Burn the houses." As the success of the regular troops became more and more pronounced, Régère himself went into hiding, but he was discovered at an hotel and arrested there. It was asserted at the time that he had bank-notes representing no less than £16,000 in his possession.

Raoul Georges Adolphe Rigault, one of the Commune's very youngest members, for he was scarcely twenty-five years of age when the insurrection began, was the son of a functionary of the Republic of 1848. A Parisian by birth, he was educated chiefly at the College of Versailles, then returned to the capital to study medicine there. But he became a veritable Bohemian, danced at the Bal Bullier and the Pré-aux-Clercs, tippled in one and another *brasserie*, and perorated at an infinity of public meetings. The authorities of the Empire sent him to prison for attacking public morality and religion, and he was no sooner released at the Revolution after Sedan than he hied him to the Prefecture of Police, and assumed control of the detective department there, regarding himself, indeed, as a veritable Lecoq or Sherlock Holmes. The National Defence Government, however, would have none of him, and he was removed from the Prefecture, with the natural result that he took to conspiring against the new authorities.

When the Commune arrived Rigault again made himself master at the Prefecture of Police, that is, until he was transferred to the post of Public Prosecutor. Like Ferré, he somewhat suggested a bantam-cock, for he was very short, fond of standing on tip-toes, and addicted to exerting his lungs. He had a full beard, sported glasses, and (being a very chilly mortal) generally wore, in his Quartier Latin days, three or four coats atop of one another, in the fashion said to have been followed by the Duke of Portland of the notorious Druce case. Under the Commune, though Rigault became a "judicial functionary," he always arrayed himself in uniform as a superior officer of the National Guard. During his term of office he had only a couple of good actions

to his credit, the release of Schoelcher the deputy, and that of the journalistic Vicomte de Bragelonne, both of whom had been summarily arrested. On the other hand, he himself seized the Archbishop of Paris and others, and he was responsible for the fate which overtook several of the Commune's captives, notably the unfortunate Gustave Chaudey, and some gendarmes. Again, the orders to set fire to the Palace of the Tuileries, the Palais Royal, and the Palais de Justice appear to have emanated from Raoul Rigault. When the end came he sought refuge in a *maison meublée* of the Rue Gay Lussac, where he had previously taken lodgings for his mistress, a Mlle. Varda, who played minor parts at some of the smaller Paris theatres. Being discovered there, he was asked his name, and was then taken to the Luxembourg, where he was shot—shouting, " Vive la Commune ! " as he fell.

Whilst Rigault's colleague Serraillier was a manufacturer of boot-trees, born in 1840 at Draguignan in southern France, his colleague Sicard, who had a red, pock-marked face, was yet another of the many boot-makers included among the members of the Commune. Serraillier had been prominent in the affairs of the International, in connection with which he had spent several years in England, where he learnt to speak our language so fluently that many people took him to be an Englishman. He belonged to the Commune's Socialist minority, and attended chiefly to the municipal affairs of his district. It was said that he escaped by way of the sewers when the troops captured the town-hall where he was stationed. Sicard was a rather younger man, with a shop in the Rue du Bac. He served on the Commune's last Military Committee.

Among the moderate minority I may include Albert Theisz, who was of about the same age as Serraillier, an Internationalist also, and a bronze-worker by calling. He was chosen to be the Commune's Postmaster General, but could not secure the services of postmen, and was still trying to organize a delivery of letters when the *régime* fell. Yet another of the Commune's "moderates" was Gustave Tridon, who had repeatedly been sentenced for conspiracy under the Empire. He was the son of a Côte d'Or landowner, who, at the time of the first Revolution, had made a fortune by buying up the confiscated estates of *émigré* noblemen and re-selling them in small parcels at a profit. The son came from Dijon to Paris to study law, and was received as an advocate, but gave most of his time to revolutionary journalism. Weak-looking, pale, even haggard, he was nevertheless a man of sufficient strength of character to throw up his connection with the Commune when it resorted to positive deeds of violence, even as he had previously resigned his position as a member of the National Assembly when the latter would not adopt conciliatory courses with the insurgent Parisians.

Why so many bootmakers became members of the Commune is a mystery, but in addition to all those whom I have already named, there was Trinquet of Belleville, who served on the new *régime's* Police Committee. Urbain, on the other hand, was an ex-schoolmaster who had inculcated Republican ideas to his pupils. He was a pretentious, vulgar, dirty-looking fellow, noted for his greasy, shiny coats. When the Commune fell he tried to escape in the disguise of a cab-driver, but was recognized and apprehended. A similar fate overtook his friend

Trinquet, and they were both sentenced to hard labour for life.

Marie Édouard Vaillant, a friend of Franckel's, was, perhaps, the best educated of all the men of the Commune. Born, like Félix Pyat, at Vierzon, he was taken to Germany by his parents and educated there, completing his studies at the universities of Heidelberg and Tubingen. He became qualified both as a medical man and as a civil engineer, and there could be no doubt of his attainments. But revolutionary ideas possessed him. He was a member of the Central Committee of the National Guard during the German Siege of Paris, and became its delegate at the Home Office after the rising of March 18. He urged the Commune on to vigorous, otherwise violent, measures, and voted for the establishment of a Committee of Public Safety. One of his *dicta* at the time was that society had but one duty towards Princes, which was to kill them; and but one formality to observe, which was to make sure of their identity. At the fall of the Commune Vaillant, who was wounded in the head during the street-fighting, contrived to escape from a house in the Rue de Rivoli, and made his way to Saint-Denis, where he was befriended by some German officers, whom he had known in his university days. They enabled him to get to England, where he lived for a considerable time. Profiting by an amnesty, he at last returned to Paris, was elected as one of the city's municipal councillors, and established a daily socialist journal called *L'Homme Libre*. Of more recent years, from 1892 onward, he has been a member of successive Chambers of Deputies, still very vigorous and passionate in spite of his advancing years.

Another of the Commune's notabilities was Jules Vallès, the author of "Les Refractaires," "Les Irréguliers," "Les Saltimbanques," "Jacques Vingtras," and other works, generally full of bitterness, and written in a nervous, pungent, thoroughly distinctive style. Alphonse Daudet said of Vallès that he had the rasping laugh and the bilious eyes of a man whose childhood had been unhappy, and who bore a grudge against all mankind because he had been obliged to wear ridiculous garments made out of his father's old clothes. Vallès himself wrote one day on the back of a photograph portraying him:—

"C'est bien là ma mine bourrue
Qui dans un salon ferait peur,
Mais qui, peut-être, dans la rue
Plairait à la foule en fureur.*

"Je suis l'ami du pauvre hère
Qui dans l'ombre a froid, faim, sommeil;
Comment, artiste, as-tu pu faire
Mon portrait avec du soleil?"

He was born in June, 1832, at Le Puys in the Haute-Loire, began his education at Saint-Étienne, and ultimately attended the Lycée Bonaparte in Paris. Then he drifted into journalism, contributed to a number of papers, and established others, the best of the latter being *La Rue*. On one occasion, during the last years of the Empire, he was announced to deliver a lecture on Balzac's life and works at the Salle des Conférences in the Boulevard des Capucines, but I do not think that he so much as mentioned Balzac in the course of his address, which was simply an attack on religion in general and on the Trinity in particular. The detectives in the

* Vallès had a grim face with a square forehead and stern eyes, one of which was considerably larger than the other.

hall took note of this, and a number of *sergents-de-ville* were summoned to clear and close the premises. During the Siege of Paris Vallès fiercely attacked the National Defence authorities, and under the Commune he became a Delegate for Education. After escaping to London he figured prominently among the Communards who met at the Café Royal in Regent Street, but was ultimately able to return to Paris, where he died in February, 1885.

Of Pierre Vésinier, sometime secretary to Eugène Sue, I spoke in connection with the Commune's *Journal Officiel.* Viard, who described himself as "young but practical," was the nephew of a wealthy varnish manufacturer, and was employed by the Commune to seize the silver plate of Napoleon III and convey it to the Mint, in order that it might there be turned into francs. Scarcity of money was, we know, one of the difficulties which always beset the Commune, and nobody harped on the subject more than its first Financial Delegate, Louis Eugène Varlin, a thin, puny, journeyman bookbinder of thirty or thereabouts. He had been mixed up in the affairs of the International, and was very intelligent and personally honest. At the fall of the Commune he was arrested in a café at Montmartre, marched to the Rue des Rosiers, and shot in the very garden where Generals Lecomte and Thomas had been assassinated. There was a story current at the time to the effect that Varlin's hair (like Marie Antoinette's) turned quite white whilst he was being led to execution. His colleague Verdure—who, like Urbain, was a former schoolmaster, and, like Vallès, served on the Commune's Educational Committee—escaped the death penalty. He might even have escaped arrest, but he was betrayed by his mistress

and sentenced to transportation. At one time Verdure had interested himself in the co-operative movement, at another he had acted as cashier in the office of Rochefort's journal *La Marseillaise*, to which he had also contributed.

Auguste Vermorel, who came from Denicé, not far from Lyons, was a notoriety of the Parisian democratic press, and in following its fortunes had lost a small competence and drawn on himself a number of fines and terms of imprisonment. On one occasion he incurred penalties for libelling the self-styled *singe a la mode*, the famous Princesse de Metternich. Tall, thin, and spectacled, suggesting a seminarist in appearance, he had, nevertheless, written a book on the women of the notorious Jardin Mabille and a couple of unedifying novels, besides working for Émile de Girardin on *La Presse* and *La Liberté* and editing a paper of his own, called *Le Courrier Français*. Under the Commune he helped to look after its artillery, but often took up an independent position, as when he protested against the wholesale suppression of conservative newspapers, and denounced the dictatorial measures of Raoul Rigault, whom he contrived to replace at the Prefecture of Police by Cournet. He was involved in the last street-fighting in Paris, and after delivering an oration over the remains of the Polish General Dombrowski, was badly wounded near the Barrière du Trône, and carried as a prisoner to Versailles. He died there a week or two afterwards.

I have now said something respecting all the members of the Commune, but several notorious men who were not actually members of the Government were connected with it as officers or functionaries. Very prominent among the military contingent

was Yaroslav Dombrowski, a curious account of whom is given in a little book written by a fellow Pole named Bromislaw Wolowski. The eldest of three brothers, Dombrowski was born in Volhynia in 1835, entered the cadet school at St. Petersburg, became an artillery lieutenant, and served for a time in the Caucasus, where he gained a captaincy. But he participated in the Polish rising of 1862, being indeed chosen to organize and direct the insurgents at Warsaw. He was arrested, however, and sentenced to death, but in 1864 the penalty was commuted to transportation to Siberia, with fifteen years of hard labour in the mines. Whilst in prison he had obtained permission to marry a young person named Pelagia Swidzeuska, a native of Posen, and before reaching Siberia they both contrived to escape from custody and even to quit Russia, repairing in the first instance to Stockholm. In 1865 Dombrowski was in France, but in the ensuing year he betook himself to Austria, followed the Seven Weeks' War, which culminated in the Prussian victory of Königgrätz, and wrote a book about it. He was also at this time purchasing weapons for the Poles in view of another insurrection.

The outbreak of the Franco-German War found him again in France, and anxious to see service. An opportunity came after the fall of the Empire, when Garibaldi assumed command of the army of the Vosges. The Polish General Bosak-Hauké then recommended Dombrowski to the Italian Liberator, who asked Gambetta to send him the young exile. But Dombrowski was in Paris, which the Germans had invested, and while, on one hand, his friend Wolowski failed in a special mission to get into Paris with Gambetta's instructions, on the other,

Dombrowski was wrongly suspected of being a German spy, in such wise that the authorities would not send him out of the city in a balloon as Garibaldi wished them to do.

At the advent of the Commune Dombrowski had no thought of joining it. A letter of his shows that, the Franco-German War being over, he wished to lead a quiet life with his wife and his three young children. But there were other Poles in Paris, including his two brothers, and he was ultimately prevailed upon by one or another to join the insurrection and accept, in the first instance, the command of the 11th Legion of the National Guard. Later, after the collapse of the vain-glorious Bergeret, Dombrowski directed the defence of Neuilly where the Government troops were making their greatest effort. He was never popular with his men. His foreign nationality set them against him, the more particularly, perhaps, as his French was very faulty. On his side, he complained that his subordinates were either unwilling or incompetent to execute his orders. Of his own military proficiency there is ample evidence, and in spite of a terrific bombardment, he held Neuilly as long as it was possible to do so.

The Versailles authorities imagined him to be venal, and his friend Wolowski tells in detail, with the support of documents, how both Ernest Picard, Minister of the Interior, and Thiers himself, tried to bribe Dombrowski, first to arrest the members of the Commune, and secondly to facilitate the entry of the Government troops into Paris. He had only to name his own price and it was to be paid to him. Further, there was a scheme to detach all the Polish officers from the Commune's cause and get them out

of Paris. Dombrowski, however, rejected every offer of money, and the negotiations finally collapsed on the troops effecting an entry into the capital by way of Auteuil. Dombrowski was ultimately killed during the street-fighting under circumstances which I shall narrate in a later chapter. He must not be confounded with his brother Ladislas, who was only a Colonel in the Commune's service, and commanded for a short time at Asnières, and later at the Place Vendôme. Another brother, Émile, a railway employé, did not serve the Commune.

Among the other Poles who joined it, however, were Wroblewski and Okolowitz. The former had been a colonel in the insurrection of 1862–1863, and subsequently coming to Paris as an exile, had earned some kind of living there by giving music lessons. He and Yaroslaw Dombrowski were on unfriendly terms. Under the Commune Wroblewski held the village of Vanves with a couple of battalions of the National Guard. At the finish he surrendered and advised his men to do the same. Okolowitz, who was three years younger than Dombrowski, had also participated in the last great Polish rising, since when he had dabbled in musical ventures in Paris, singing at one time at the little Tour d'Auvergne Theatre, and at another renting the Casino Cadet dancing-hall and turning it into a café concert. He served in a corps of francs-tireurs during the Franco-German War, and under the Commune Dombrowski, with Cluseret's assent, placed him in command of the Communalist forces at Asnières. Of his conduct there I shall have occasion to speak hereafter. When the regular army entered Paris, Okolowitz was taken prisoner in the Champs Élysées district and shot at the Palais de l'Industrie.

Le Cecilia was currently supposed to be an Italian, and his parents may have been of that nationality, but it is said that he was born at Tours in September, 1835. In any case, he served with Garibaldi in Sicily, became an officer of francs-tireurs during the Franco-German War, and participated in the famous defence of Châteaudun. During the Commune he assembled a free-corps of foreigners, former Garibaldians and so forth, and ultimately commanded the forces at Issy. At the finish he escaped to London, where, having high linguistic attainments, he became a professor of languages. Attracted by Oriental studies, he ultimately repaired to Cairo, where he died in November, 1878.

Nathaniel Rossel, who succeeded Cluseret as Delegate at War, was of mixed parentage, being the son of a French Major in the Line by a Scotswoman named Campbell, whose father is said to have been an officer in our Indian army. Born at Saint-Brieuc in Brittany in 1844, Rossel was trained for the military profession, and when the Franco-German War began he was serving as a captain of Engineers at Bourges. Being transferred to Metz, he went through the siege there, and was one of the malcontent officers who, in their disgust at the conduct of Marshal Bazaine, wished to depose and even arrest him. After Bazaine's capitulation Rossel contrived to escape, and the National Defence gave him a colonelcy and the command of a training camp at Nevers. He was, however, profoundly affected by the disasters of the war, and the humiliating and onerous terms of peace. Displeased with everything in the military spheres of the time, and burning with a feverish patriotism, he sent in his papers on

the very morrow of the rising of the Commune and joined the insurgents. At first he was, I think, merely aide-de-camp to Cluseret; next, however, he became President of the Commune's Court Martial; and, finally, Cluseret's successor as Delegate at War. In that capacity he was suspected of conspiring against the Commune, and may have done so. At all events, his arrest was ordered, and he went into hiding with his friend Charles Gerardin.* At the fall of the Commune, however, in spite of a disguise which he had assumed, he was recognized by some former army-subordinates, and after being court-martialled at Versailles, was shot at Satory, although many efforts were made to procure a reprieve on the ground that his case had been purely and simply one of mistaken patriotism.

Cluseret asserts in his work "The Military Side of the Commune" that Rossel aspired to play the part of a Bonaparte, and accuses him of underhand intrigues with the Germans, adding: "It was invariably through him that I communicated with them." According also to Cluseret, it was Rossel who negotiated with the Germans the supply of a large number of horses for the Commune, at a cost of £16,000, which arrangement was not carried into effect, however, as the animals were found to be in very poor condition, and by no means worth the price. Whether those tales be true or not—Cluseret's assertions must often be taken with some salt—Rossel's position as an ex-army officer, who had deliberately gone over to the rebels, precluded the Government from exercising clemency towards him. I mentioned in "Republican France," that he was by no means of prepossessing appearance. He had a

* See p. 108, *ante*.

low, frowning forehead, crowned with thick, bushy hair, brown, with gleams of auburn. When he arrived in Paris to join the Commune, his long, narrow face was clean-shaven, later he displayed a small, ill-growing moustache and a sparse beard —both of them red. His mouth was very hard; his eyes, a light blue, were usually hidden by coloured glasses. He had written, at one moment, some crisp, forcible, well-arranged military articles for *Le Temps;* but his speech was not pleasing, he spoke too rapidly, the words gushing from his mouth in a most disorderly manner.

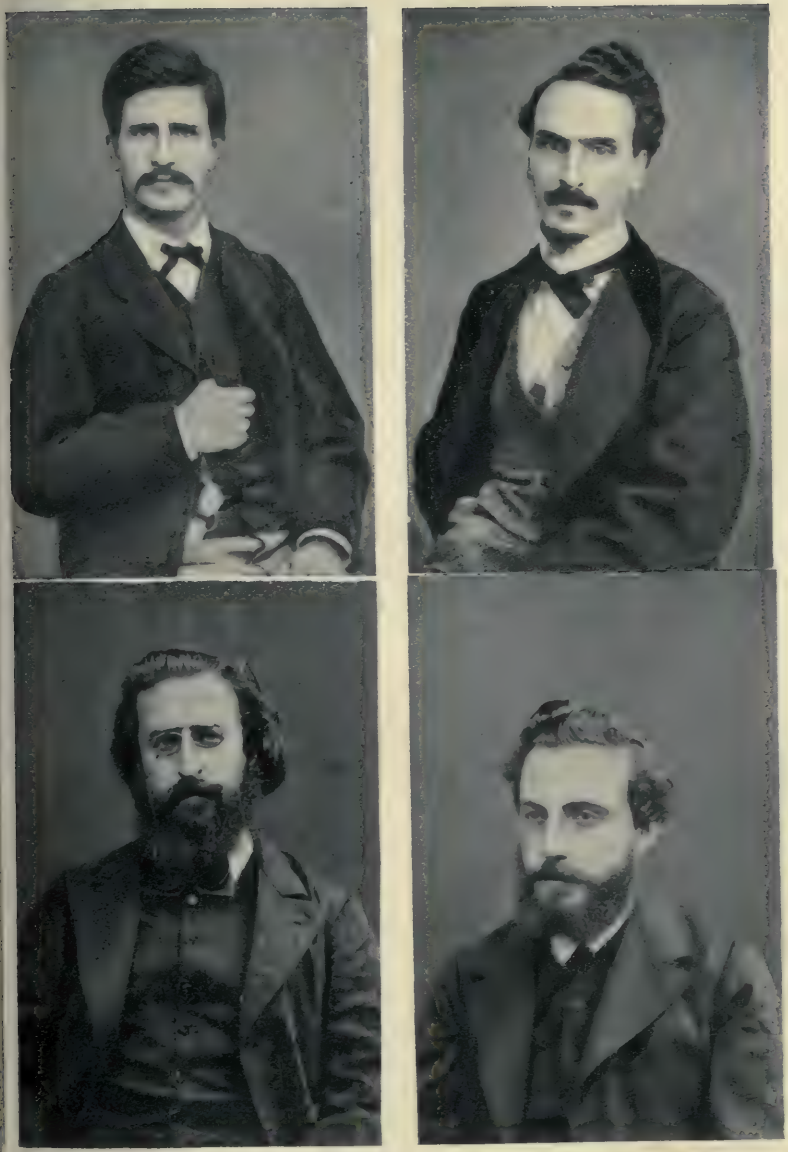
Besides Duval, the young brass-founder, who imagined himself to be a heaven-born general, but was captured and shot by the Versaillese troops in the first Communalist *sortie* from Paris, another of the insurgent leaders fell early in the struggle. This was that revolutionary celebrity Gustave Flourens, who by his parentage belonged to the south of France, but was born in Paris in 1838. His father, Pierre Flourens, after achieving fame as a professor of physiology, became a member of the French Academy and Secretary to the Academy of Sciences. Gustave also graduated in literature and science, and in 1863, when illness prevented his father from discharging his duties, he took his place. Later he travelled in England and Belgium, and, on a rebellion breaking out in Crete, joined the insurgents, and was sent as their representative to Athens. His presence not being acceptable, however, to the Greek authorities, he was despatched to France, whence he subsequently betook himself to Naples. But some violent newspaper articles made Naples also too hot for him, and the officials sent him out of the country. He next appeared in Paris in 1868

(when Napoleon III had just restored the right of public meeting), flung himself into the anti-governmental campaign which followed that concession, and before long found himself in prison.

After his release, he challenged the Bonapartist champion Paul de Cassagnac, and was seriously wounded during a ferocious fight with swords. Upon his recovery he again participated in the agitation against the Empire; but to avoid being re-arrested, he repaired to London. At the overthrow of the Empire he returned to Paris, where the National Defence gave him the special rank of *major de rempart* with the command of five battalions of Guards. He became, however, a leading spirit in the disturbances which arose during the siege. Imprisoned for his attempt to overthrow the Government on October 31, he was afterwards released by some rioters; and when the Commune was established, he at once gave it his services. During the first week in April, however, he was surprised by some gendarmes in a house on the confines of Chatou and Le Vésinet—west of Paris—this happening at the time of Bergeret's attempted march on Versailles; and when, eager to escape, he had shot one of them dead with a revolver, their officer cut him down with his sabre.

A man of real culture and ability, tall, bald, with a flowing beard, an aquiline nose and flashing eyes, impulsive by reason of his southern origin, Flourens thirsted for adventure, and gave way to a kind of unreasoning, fiery, fanatical patriotism, which was carried, at times, to the point of insanity. There was no small amount of such insanity, a contagious aberration, among the men of the Commune.

Among the *régime's* remaining military leaders



SOME MEN OF THE COMMUNE (IV).

1. *Rossel.*
2. *Rochefort.*
3. *Ferré.*
4. *Mégy.*

was Razoua, whose early life had been spent in Algeria, this inspiring him to write an interesting little book called "Souvenirs d'un Spahi." Coming to Paris, he frequented that well-known literary haunt, the Café de Madrid, wrote for various papers, including Delescluze's journal *Le Reveil*, and joined in the plots against the Empire. During the Siege of Paris his share in the attempts to overthrow the National Defence Administration deprived him of the command of a battalion of the National Guard, but the Commune reinstated him, and gave him the governorship of the École Militaire. He was simply an old soldier who had drifted unwisely into journalism and politics. More fortunate than others, he escaped to Switzerland when the Commune fell.

His friend Jaclard, who commanded a Legion of the National Guard, was a Lorrainer, born at Metz, the surrender of which stronghold to Germany infuriated him. By avocation he was a professor of mathematics, but, taking to politics, he became for a time a fervent adherent of Blanqui, and served, also, with Clemenceau on the municipality of Montmartre. If I remember rightly, Jaclard hanged himself during his imprisonment at Versailles after the fall of the Commune. The latter also numbered among its more prominent military men a certain Ganier d'Abin, who was said to have fought in many parts of the world, and to have been appointed at one time generalissimo of the Siamese Army, which he attempted to equip and drill on European principles. For a while he commanded for the Commune at Montmartre.

Turning to the *régime's* civil functionaries, there was a certain Alavoine at the head of the Imprimerie Nationale, whilst a working-jeweller named Camelinat

became Director of the Mint. Georges Cavalié, *alias* Pipe-en-Bors, Bohemian, perpetual student, and sometime secretary to Gambetta, succeeded the famous Alphand as chief engineer of the city, and turned his attention to watering the streets during that warm, bright, dusty spring of 1871—a spring such as is seldom experienced. The burly Fontaine, a former pupil of the École Polytechnique and an architect, was appointed Directeur des Domaines and charged with the demolition of Thiers's house on the Place Saint-Georges. Meantime, Garnier, a petty actor of the Bouffes-Parisiens, became director of the Opera House,* and had at last managed to assemble a company and to start rehearsals when the regular troops entered the city. On the other hand, a certain Francisco Salvador, a Spanish musician, was chosen to succeed Auber at the Conservatoire de Musique. Salvador was afterwards shot in the Rue Bonaparte. Treillard, Director of the Poor Relief Service (Assistance Publique), met with a similar fate. He had originally been an *avoué* or solicitor at Lyons.

Several "officials" of the Commune were temporarily delegated to stir up the provinces, among them being Bastelica, who was afterwards placed at the head of the Octroi service; Abel Peyrouton, an ambitious young advocate; and a certain Landeck who was involved in the rising at Marseilles. A cousin of Louis Blanc, named Romanetti, became Directeur du Personnel at the Ministry of War. Regnard, a law student, was appointed a Police Delegate. Le Moussu, another student, became a Commissary of Police, his special function being to

* It is curious that a namesake of his, Charles Garnier, was architect of the new opera-house inaugurated in 1875.

notify the Commune's decisions to the press; and Pilotell, the caricaturist—who, I believe, is still alive—undertook similar duties, besides being, like Courbet, a Delegate for Fine Arts. He was involved in the deplorable affair of Gustave Chaudey, the journalist, whose residence he searched for compromising papers, and he is also said to have arrested Polo, the manager of the satirical journal *L'Éclipse*, to some of whose cartoons he and others apparently took exception. In that respect, M. Pilotell might at least have remembered that some of his own caricatures were of a nature to give great offence to many people, as is clearly shown by those which are now in the British Museum's collection.

There was also a certain Dacosta, an *habitué* of the Quartier Latin, who was associated with Raoul Rigault in the arrests and prosecutions of the Commune. He was present at—perhaps even superintended—the "execution" of some of the hostages. Although quite young, he was noted for his unfeeling disposition. Edmond Levraud, who had started in life as a traveller in the wine trade, and had then become mixed up with Parisian students and conspirators, acted as Chief Commissary at the Prefecture of Police, and I well remember applying to him for a passport which would enable me to go in and out of Paris without being arrested by the National Guards. As I previously indicated, there were no postal deliveries in the city, and in order to obtain any letters which might be sent to one from England or elsewhere, it was necessary to go to Saint-Denis, where the Germans were garrisoned. As the Commune speedily decreed that all young and middle-aged men should be prevented from leaving the capital, and incorporated *nolens volens*

in the ranks of its own forces, I ran a risk of arrest and detention every time I attempted to go in search of the correspondence addressed to my father or myself. It was this circumstance which induced me to apply to the Commune for a passport.

I was received quite courteously by Levraud, who at once consented to give me what I desired, and proceeded to fill in a form at the top of which appeared the imperial escutcheon, followed by the words "Empire Français." These had been half-obliterated, the words "République Française" being stamped beneath them. Citizen Levraud shook his head, however, drew his pen through "République Française," and then wrote: "Commune de Paris." For the rest, the document instructed all the civil and military authorities of the Commune to allow me, Ernest Vizetelly, *Citoyen britannique*, to travel freely between Paris and Saint-Denis, and to give me all the aid and protection of which I might be in need. The document also supplied an elaborate description of my person. My nose was designated as *fort*, my mouth as *ordinaire*, my moustache as *naissante*, and my figure as *mince*. I was at that time in my eighteenth year, which fact was also duly recorded.

That passport proved very useful to me, not only with regard to my frequent journeys to Saint-Denis, but also whenever I had any little trouble with officials of the Commune. At that time the Poste Restante at Saint-Denis was established in the local theatre. You entered the auditorium, handed a card to one of the post-office clerks seated on the stage, and then sat down in one of the stalls until your name was called and you received your correspondence. The Germans, as I have said, were in

force at Saint-Denis, which I also found crowded with women of the Paris Boulevards, who sat in the local cafés, drinking and chatting gaily with *leurs amis les ennemis.* Many of them, moreover, were to be seen boating on the Seine with German officers, the spring-weather that year being so delightfully bright and warm.

Now and again, when I made one of those journeys, I saw young fellows arrested at the Gare du Nord, whilst they were trying to get out of Paris in order to escape service with the insurgent battalions. On two such occasions they were very badly disguised as girls, and their arrest afforded no little amusement to those who witnessed it. Before any train started, every railway-carriage was carefully inspected by armed National Guards, and you were required to lift your legs in order that these vigilant myrmidons of the Commune might ascertain that nobody was concealed under the seats.

Apropos of the so-called "reactionary" journalists for whose arrest warrants were issued, they included my friend Lucien Marc, who in after years succeeded his father, Auguste Marc, as Director of *L'Illustration.* The offices of that journal were then in the Rue de Richelieu, whither a party of guards repaired in order to effect young Marc's arrest. He was conversing at the time with Théophile Gautier (who was then in extremely bad health), and on being warned that some National Guards were in the outer office, he fled upstairs, and contrived to make his escape by crossing over a glass-roof, an extremely dangerous undertaking. Gautier, whom the National Guards did not recognize, remained, I believe, unmolested, and Marc, after hiding for a few hours in an adjoining house, made his way to

the Rue de Miromesnil, where my father, myself, and my younger brother Arthur were residing.

It became necessary to smuggle Marc out of Paris, which duty devolved on me. It was useless to lend him the passport which I had obtained from the Commune, for the description it gave of my person did not tally with his appearance. He was still quite a young man, but he was several years my senior. After thinking the matter over, we borrowed my father's British passport, and went off to the Gare du Nord to try our luck there. Marc had been in the United States for a short time, and thus fortunately spoke some English. Moreover, he was quite fair, and to an uncritical eye might at that period at all events have passed for an Englishman. We agreed that he should pretend to know no French, and on reaching the station it was I who took the tickets to Saint-Denis and who parleyed with the guards stationed at the door of the waiting-room. They already knew me by sight, as I had often been called upon to show them my passport. I explained to them that the citizen with me was my cousin, and after they had glanced at the British passport which Marc carried—a finely engraved document which, of course, included no description whatever of the bearer's person—they allowed both of us to go our way. Thus we reached Saint-Denis, and, whilst I was returning to Paris, Marc journeyed on to Versailles in one of the many *tapissières* and *chars-à-bancs* which then conveyed Parisian fugitives by a circuitous route from Saint-Denis to the new temporary capital of France.

VI

FIGHTING BEGINS—FIRST ARRESTS—ASPECTS OF PARIS

Outbreak of Hostilities—The Commune resolves to march on Versailles—"We are betrayed!"—Rout of Bergeret—Fate of Flourens—Eudes driven back—Duval defeated, captured, and shot—Alarm in Paris—Women demonstrate—German Precautions—Funeral of Commandant Henry—Communalist Love of Good Cheer—The Government Troops secure Neuilly Bridge—Some Decrees of the Commune—Schemes to despoil the Church and secure Hostages—Archbishop Darboy—Mgr. Surat—The Dominicans—Suppression of Newspapers—Rochefort and Thiers's House—The Guillotine Burnt—State Obsequies—The Sisters of the Poor—Arrests and Escapes—Provincial Communes.

It was on Palm Sunday, April 2, six days after the election of the Commune, that actual hostilities began between the rival powers of Paris and Versailles. The Government had decided to make an effort to regain possession of the capital, and the Communalists deemed it advisable to march on Versailles before the Government could further reinforce the troops commanded there by General Vinoy. It will be remembered that when Napoleon became First Consul, he said to Bourrienne—so the latter asserts: "Here we are in the Tuileries. The question now is to stay here!" The Commune in its turn had installed itself at the Hôtel-de-Ville, and realized that in order to remain there it had to annihilate its jealous rivals, the National Assembly and the ministry presided over by Thiers. Its chief partisans on the press steadily exhorted it to

take that course. *Le Père Duchêne*, the horrible journal edited by Vermesch and Alphonse Humbert,* declared that the Assembly must at once be crushed, for which purpose a hundred thousand Parisian bayonets ought to surround its meeting-place, the theatre of the palace of Versailles. Preparations to carry that advice into effect were already being made on Palm Sunday, when the National Guards and the regulars first came into conflict. This occurred at Courbevoie on the left bank of the Seine, west of Paris, and was the upshot of an attempt made by an army-surgeon named Pasquier to parley with a detachment of National Guards. One of the latter, however, shot him dead with a revolver, and a fight immediately ensued. Two battalions of Guards were driven back to the bridge of Neuilly which the Commune had barricaded; but whilst a battery installed on the slopes of Mont Valérien—not at the fort itself, which by virtue of the convention with the Germans, had at this moment no guns mounted—began to fire upon Neuilly, a force of linesmen carried the barricade, the Guards fleeing in the direction of the Maillot Gate of the Paris ramparts.

This occurred in the morning, and on news of the reverse being telegraphed to the Hôtel-de-Ville,

* Humbert was born in Paris in February, 1844, and began life as a chemist's assistant. He drifted into journalism, however, and wrote articles of the greatest violence both for *La Marseillaise* and for *Le Père Duchêne*. At the fall of the Commune he was sentenced to hard labour for life, but was amnestied in 1879. Seven years later he became a municipal councillor for Paris, and it was he who as president of the council received the Russian Admiral Avellan in 1893, in which same year he was elected as a deputy. He was then still classed as a Radical Socialist, but during the Dreyfus case he became one of the foremost supporters of the militarist party, doing his utmost to defend such men as Du Paty de Clam and Walsin-Esterhazy.

the members of the Commune assembled there became terribly excited—some of them even alarmed. Orders were given to beat the "assembly" throughout Paris, and early in the afternoon quite 60,000 men were under arms on the western side of the city. The Champs Elysées and the Avenue de la Grande Armée were, I remember, crowded with sightseers, all wearing their Sunday best, and intent on watching the many battalions of Guards who marched by, shouting: "À Versailles! À Versailles!" just as, during the previous summer, one had shouted, "À Berlin!" Looking down from a balcony near the Arc de Triomphe one could plainly see a mass of men gathered on and about the Neuilly bridge. These were the soldiers who had taken possession of it during the morning, and had they only been kept there the subsequent operations of the Government forces would have been greatly facilitated. But for some reason or other—perhaps because Vinoy had not sufficient men at his disposal, or else because he feared that they might fraternize with the Guards as at the rising on March 18—the troops were withdrawn from the bridge, only some light infantry (Chasseurs de Vincennes) being left, with a couple of field-batteries, at Courbevoie. Vinoy afterwards reported that ten of his men had been killed, and thirty wounded, during the fighting. The losses among the Guards were not recorded, but judging by the number of ambulance conveyances which brought dead and wounded men back into Paris, they must have been considerable.

In any case blood had flowed on both sides, and a bitter struggle for mastery had now become inevitable. The Commune's Executive Committee at once issued a proclamation to the effect that the

attack had come from Versailles which had started civil war "with its Pontifical Zouaves and its Imperial policemen." That last statement was ridiculous, there being no Pontifical Zouaves with the Government forces, whilst the number of *ex-sergents-de-ville* incorporated among the gendarmes was infinitesimal. However, the authorities at the Hôtel-de-Ville doubtless thought it as well to inflame the passions of their partisans.

It is a moot point whether, prior to this fighting, they had fully decided on their plans with regard to the projected advance on Versailles. In any case they must have done so only a few hours afterwards, for early on the following morning (April 3) operations on an extensive scale began. It has generally been said that Cluseret devised the plan which was adopted, but there was a rumour at the time that it was supplied by his friend, the American General Sheridan, who was then in Paris. Be that as it may, the plan consisted in sending out three columns of guards, who were to converge on Versailles by different routes. The first column (commanded by Bergeret, who called himself general-in-chief) was to march by way of Nanterre, Chatou, Rueil, Bougival and La Celle Saint-Cloud. The second (led by Eudes) was to go *viâ* Issy, Bellevue, Meudon, Chaville and Viroflay; and the third (under young Duval, the brass-founder, with Razoua as his chief-of-staff) was to proceed by way of Bagneux, Sceaux, Le Plessis-Piquet and Vélizy.

Vinoy, it appears, did not anticipate an immediate attack, and had taken no precautions against one. He may have thought that the insurgents were sufficiently cowed by what had already happened. At five o'clock on the morning of April 3,

however, Mont Valérien signalled that some large bodies of men were marching out of Paris. A portion of Bergeret's force, commanded by Gustave Flourens, passed below the fortress without impediment, but all at once the batteries on the slopes opened fire and virtually cut the Flourens column in halves. Now a rumour had been spread that the officer commanding the fort was really in favour of the Commune and would even hoist the red flag when the Guards approached. This story was the more believed as it had been told by Bergeret himself before he set out in his open carriage to make what he anticipated would prove a triumphal progress to Versailles. In front of his conveyance rode a Turco who had become his orderly officer, whilst six guns also preceded him, and he had a personal escort of four thousand valiant guards. When the latter found, however, that they were being welcomed by Mont Valérien with shot and shell, whereas they had expected to be received with open arms, many of them became panic-stricken and fled whilst shouting wildly: "We are betrayed!"

Others, who were bolder, pushed on, and succeeded in reaching Nanterre, a small party of Flourens's men even getting as far as Bougival, where they hoisted the red flag on the church-tower. Meanime, however, all the troops in the vicinity were being hurried forward. Others started from Versailles, and additional artillery and cavalry came from Saint-Germain-en-Laye. In the result, the Communards were driven out of Nanterre, and retreated in great disorder. Bergeret's carriage broke down in his hurried flight, and, as the "general-in-chief" could not ride, by reason of some infirmity, he had to make the remainder of his journey to Paris on

foot. Meantime, that wild enthusiast, Flourens, had taken refuge in a house at Chatou—some say a little river-side inn kept by a man named Ducoq—and there he was found by some gendarmes and speedily cut down by Captain Desmarets. With him at the time was an orderly officer, an Italian named Pisani, who was wounded in the affair and afterwards conveyed as a prisoner to Versailles. Four days later the remains of Flourens were recovered by his unhappy mother and quietly laid to rest in the cemetery of Père Lachaise, the Communards generally becoming highly indignant when they heard that Mme. Flourens had secured the services of a priest on this occasion. Flourens, it is true, had long professed atheism.

Whilst Bergeret's force was being routed a similar fate overtook that commanded by Eudes. Supported by the guns of the fort of Issy he succeeded in advancing to Les Moulineaux, where for a time a small detachment of gendarmes opposed his further progress. At last these men had to fall back on Sèvres where their main body (about 800 strong) was stationed. There was fighting at Bas Meudon and at Bellevue, and also in the Val Fleury, on the heights above which the Communalists vainly tried to get some guns into position. The gendarmes, though they were by no means so numerous as the Guards, contested the ground virtually inch by inch, and eventually, on some reinforcements arriving from Versailles, Eudes and his men were driven back in great confusion towards the forts of Vanves and Issy.

Meantime the third column of insurgents, that under Duval, encountered no obstacles on its march *viâ* Bagneux and Sceaux. It wound round past

Meudon, still steadily advancing on Versailles by way of Le Petit-Bicêtre and the plain of Villecoublay, until it was at last within 5000 yards of the palace of Louis XIV. Then, as some troops were in view, Duval sent a flag of truce to their commander, General Derogeat, with an application that the National Guards should be allowed free entry to Versailles as they "wished to speak to the members of the Assembly." Derogeat's reply to this ridiculous message was to dismiss the envoy and to force Duval's men back upon Villecoublay. Serious fighting ensued there, but Admiral Pothuau, at the head of a naval contingent, gradually drove the Communalists towards the plateau of Châtillon.

At half-past nine o'clock on the following morning that position—with its redoubt occupied by the Germans during the siege—was vigorously assailed, and within two hours it fell into the hands of the Government troops, who took about 1200 prisoners. Among them were General Duval and General Henry. The former was brought before Vinoy, and it was widely reported at the time that when the latter inquired: "What would you have done with me if you had taken me prisoner?" Duval made answer: "I should have had you shot at once!" Thereupon Vinoy retorted: "In that case you have passed sentence on yourself." A firing party was immediately summoned. Duval readily faced it, and after crying "Vive la Commune!" actually gave the command to shoot. It was said that Vinoy afterwards remarked: "He was a rascal but a brave one." General Henry did not share Duval's fate, but was sent as a prisoner to Versailles, his course being adopted, it appears, because he repeatedly refused to give his name, and it was

thought advisable to have him properly identified. On the other hand, several insurgents belonging to Bergeret's force were shot at Chatou by order of General de Galliffet.

The Parisian masses were amazed on hearing of the successive defeats of the three armies of the Commune. On the morning of April 3, whilst hostilities were in progress, and the thunder of guns was wafted, as in the siege days, from several of the city's outlying forts, the boulevards were crowded with Guards whom the Hôtel-de-Ville authorities held, as it were, in reserve. The Rue de la Paix resembled a camp, and I remember seeing a distribution of bread and *gruyère* cheese among the waiting men. An appeal which was made to the women of Paris to gather in front of the statue of Strasbourg on the Place de la Concorde, and then march to Versailles and make a final attempt at conciliation, was utilized for a very different purpose. Some 400 women actually assembled, and, led by a party of Guards, marched off by way of the quays in the direction of Auteuil; but far from their purpose being in any degree conciliatory they openly declared that they were going to stimulate the courage of the Guards who were fighting outside the city. However, the fortune of war prevented their endeavours.

Whilst all this was going on, the Germans at Saint-Denis, some ten thousand in number, were taking a variety of precautions—such as turning the guns of the forts which they held upon Paris; setting other guns in position at both bridges spanning the canal; and throwing up earthworks beside the northern railway-line, which they likewise defended with artillery. As I previously mentioned, however,

the Communalists had no designs on the German positions. Their only enemies were the troops of the legal Government of France.

The consternation caused among the Parisian masses by the unexpected reverses of April 3 was not diminished by a spectacle which was witnessed on the following day when the remains of Commandant Henry, a brother of the General of that name, were carried in solemn procession to the cemetery of Montmartre. This Henry had been killed in the fighting near Nanterre whilst serving under Bergeret. Five or six battalions of Guards assembled to do honour to his memory, and one noticed as they marched along with arms reversed, that their drums were covered with black crape and their bugles embellished with streamers of the same material. At the cemetery there were speeches by Jules Vallès, Tibaldi, an old conspirator, and the heaven-born General Bergeret, who collapsed in the midst of his oration, realizing, perhaps, that he was largely responsible for the death of Henry as for that of many other partisans of the Commune. However, the insurgents generally imputed their reverses less to Bergeret than to Cluseret, who as Delegate at War was supposed to be jointly responsible with his friend Sheridan for the "plan" which had so egregiously failed. Moreover, many extremists regarded Cluseret as an aristocrat. Did he not, indeed, lunch every day at the Café d'Orsay, the swagger restaurant patronized aforetime by the members of the Imperial Corps Législatif? How could he manage to do such a thing when the Commune had decreed that the maximum salary of any of its officials, whether civil or military, should be the paltry sum of £20 per month?

Cluseret, however, was not the only partisan of the Commune who loved good cheer. When La Cecilia momentarily became chief of the general staff at the Place Vendôme headquarters, he wrote an urgent letter, picturesquely enlivened with Latin quotations, to Gustave May, the Commune's *intendant général*, begging him to send him at once an ample supply of cigars, asparagus, and preserved dainties, together with a cask of Bordeaux claret and another of Burgundy. For a time, too, open-house was kept at the Hôtel-de-Ville, where friends of certain members of the Commune freely invited themselves to lunch and dinner. The expense which this entailed becoming at last considerable, the aforesaid friends were informed that, although their company would always be very welcome, they must in future pay for their meals.

Let me now return for a moment to the military situation. On Wednesday, April 5, the hostilities were confined to an artillery duel between the Government forces established in the redoubt of Châtillon, and the neighbouring forts—such as Vanves and Montrouge—which were held by the insurgents. For the time, however, nothing came of this cannonading, vigorous though it was. On the 6th the Communalists decided to make a sortie from Neuilly, and they contrived to effect a lodgment at Puteaux. But they were once more driven back across the Seine, and on the following day the troops made a vigorous attack on the Neuilly bridge which Vinoy had previously abandoned. Many thousands of people again flocked to the Place de l'Étoile and the Avenue de la Grande Armée to see or hear something of the fighting. For a while the Versailles artillery literally bombarded the bridge

and the river-side houses of Neuilly, where the remaining residents became terribly alarmed and hastily withdrew into Paris. At last, however, the troops resolved on an advance, and the barricades at either end of the bridge were then carried by assault. Two of the Government commanders, Generals Besson and Péchaud, as well as a number of officers, were killed during the fighting, but, on the other hand, the loss of the bridge was a very serious one for the insurgents, who retired in the direction of the Maillot gate of the fortifications. Briefly, the result of the fighting during the first six days was that the regular troops had secured possession of the Châtillon redoubt against which Forts Vanves and Issy thundered in vain; and that at Neuilly they were now about 1500 yards from the city ramparts. This seemed to indicate that the struggle would be a very short one, but it was prolonged by the tenacity with which the Communalists afterwards fought at Neuilly and elsewhere.

One of the first decrees issued by the Commune stated that conscription was abolished and that all men capable of bearing arms were to be drafted into the National Guard. A second decree set forth that no landlord could recover rent for the quarters ending in October, 1870, and January and April, 1871—that is the period covered by the German Siege and the insurrection. Next came a decree ordering the Mont de Piété to give up, free of charge, all articles which were pledged with it, provided that they were necessaries. On April 3, the day of the famous sorties, another important decree was issued. It ordained the separation of Church and State, suppressed the budget of public worship (and therefore the stipends of all the Paris priests),

and declared all property of whatever kind which the religious orders held by deed of gift to be national property. Curiously enough, on the very morning when this decree appeared in the *Journal Officiel* the *Père Duchêne* openly advocated the robbery of all church establishments.

The effect of the Commune's decree and Vermesch's article was not long delayed. That same night a band of Guards attacked the Collège Rollin, fired on it, broke down the door, and, on finding no money, carried off all the provisions which were in the larder. Meantime, another body of insurgents broke into the Jesuit College in the Rue des Postes, where they declared that they had come to search for arms. Some were certainly found, but they had not been stored there by the Jesuit fathers for purposes of attack or even of defence. During the German siege the college had been used as an ambulance, and on a variety of occasions the weapons of wounded men had been deposited there. When a patient recovered, if he were fit for service again, he took his arms away with him. But he often left them behind when he was permanently invalided. Moreover, there were the cases of the men who died in this ambulance, leaving their equipment there. Nevertheless, the story that weapons had been found at the establishment in the Rue des Postes, and that the Jesuits had been arming themselves in order to attack the Commune found many believers among those extremely gullible folk, our friends the Parisians. It was, indeed, easy to convince the masses that the Church was in league with those hated soldiers of Versailles who were already bombarding Neuilly and slaughtering the valiant defenders of the capital.

Further, the summary shooting of the insurgent leader Duval at Châtillon, inspired sundry members of the Commune with the idea of securing hostages on whom they might exercise reprisals if any more of their generals and men were shot. At this stage there was, I am convinced, no deliberate intention to put any hostages to death; but it was thought that the imprisonment of a number of prominent people, particularly members of the clergy, would suffice to incline the Versailles authorities to adopt milder measures than they had taken hitherto, for fear, indeed, lest sanguinary reprisals should ensue.* On April 4, then, the Archbishop of Paris was arrested. His name was Georges Darboy. A native of Fays-Billot, near Langres, he had attained to his high station when only fifty years of age. That was eight years before the Commune. He was a man of culture, mild and good-natured.

The Roman Catholic Church is often admirably served by its "secret police." Things which others may strive to keep from its knowledge become known to it in curious, mysterious ways. Raoul Rigault and others who were bent on securing the person of the Archbishop must have done all they could to keep their intention secret until the very last moment. Yet, somehow or other, it came to the knowledge of M. Desoye, the printer of a widely-read Church organ, *La Semaine Religieuse*. Remembering that sundry prominent Communards were befriended by priests, even helped to escape, when the insurrection was suppressed, I have often wondered

* There was, too, undoubtedly the idea that the members of the Commune itself might escape all punishment if the insurrection should end by collapsing, as terms to that effect could be negotiated with the Government, provided they had hostages in safe custody.

whether, in one or another instance, that may not have been in recognition of the warning given respecting Mgr. Darboy's impending arrest.* At all events, the printer I have mentioned was warned, and immediately sent a letter to the Palais de l'Archevêché, where it was found lying open on the prelate's table when the National Guards burst in to arrest him and carry him before Raoul Rigault. It is, I think, quite certain that Mgr. Darboy received the warning in time to act upon it, but that, like a true soldier of the Church militant, he was resolved to remain at his post whatever might ensue. Indeed he wrote M. Desoye a brief note to that effect. Thus he was arrested and conducted to Rigault's office at the Prefecture of Police. The little dictatorial delegate was there in full uniform, attended by his ferocious secretary Dacosta, and he at once put on his most pompous manner. When in reply to some question the Archbishop began, in his paternal way: "My children——" Rigault replied in his stern, loud voice: "There are no children here, you are speaking to magistrates!" Forthwith he committed the prelate to the prison of Masas.

Mgr. Sibour, Darboy's predecessor in the see of Paris, had been murdered by a fanatical priest in 1863; Sibour's predecessor, Mgr. Affre, had perished whilst tending the wounded during the desperate rising in June, 1848. These facts were, of course, well-known to Darboy, who, indeed, had been Sibour's Vicar-General, and he may not have been without apprehension respecting his own fate. Yet he regarded everything with great composure. He was in no wise an Ultramontane prelate, but a very

* I must add, in fairness, that a good many members of the Commune disapproved of the arrest of the Archbishop and the other hostages.

THE ARREST OF ARCHBISHOP DARBOY.

liberal and tolerant Gallican, as he had repeatedly shown during the eight years of his episcopate. Although he eventually bowed to the decision of the Œcumenical Council of 1869–70 in regard to the dogma of Papal Infallibility, he previously opposed that doctrine, and on this account and by reason of the steady support which he gave to the Concordat between France and Rome—many provisions of which the Vatican wished to set aside—he drew upon himself the animosity of Pius IX and the bulk of the Roman *curia*. Napoleon III, who so often befriended Pope Pius, applied to him not once but several times, to confer the cardinalate dignity on Georges Darboy, but neither Pius nor his adviser, the evil-living Antonelli, would consent to promote a man who was not in all things absolutely subservient to Rome. One word more respecting the unfortunate Archbishop: He was a writer of talent, with a clear, limpid style. He prepared a French translation of the "Imitation," a life of Thomas à Becket, and an interesting work on the women of the Bible.

On the same day as the Archbishop was arrested a perquisition was made at the monastery of the Dominicans in the Rue Jean-de-Beauvais and the Father Director was carried off as a hostage. Before Mgr. Darboy was removed from the archiepiscopal palace to the Police Prefecture, he contrived to have a short conversation with his vicar-general, Mgr. Surat (who held the title of Bishop of Parium *in partibus*) and implored him to place himself in safety by quitting Paris. Surat, however, felt that the arrest of the Archbishop made it all the more necessary for him to remain at his post. He did so for four-and-twenty hours when in his turn he was arrested.

At this moment there was nothing in the nature of direct communications between Paris and Versailles. Already on Palm Sunday a train coming to Paris by the Montparnasse line found itself under fire whilst passing Sèvres, and several of the passengers, in order to protect themselves from the bullets, took the cushions from the carriage-seats and placed them before the windows. As for the out-going trains they were suppressed by order of that same General Henry who two days later was taken prisoner and removed to Versailles. There, by the way, he still continued to deny his identity until he was positively recognized by Admiral Saisset who had met him during the early stages of the insurrection. Henry had been lodged in a cell at the artillery barracks of Versailles, and when Saisset inquired if there was anything he would like to have, he promptly answered: "Yes, certainly—a bottle of wine and some cigars."

Meantime further arrests were being made in Paris, but in a few instances the prisoners were speedily released. This occurred in the case of M. Denières, one of the Governors of the Bank of France, who was set at liberty at the instigation of Beslay, who feared lest the Bank should refuse to make any further advances of money if its officials were kept under lock and key. However, the fear of merely temporary arrest prompted many people to creep out of Paris as best they could. Thus certain districts became almost deserted. I recollect turning one morning into the galleries of the Palais Royal. Not a single one of the many jewellers' shops which had formerly flourished there, was open. Nearly all the restaurants, both those which were regarded as expensive and those which catered for

the million, were in like manner closed. Dentu, the publisher in the Galérie d'Orléans, still had his windows full of books, but there was nobody to look at them excepting a famished stray dog which did not appear to me to resemble a *chien savant.* As I passed along the streets that day I was stopped more than once by small parties of National Guards, and had to produce my Communalistic passport in order to avoid being marched off to prison for refusing to fight for the insurrection. Two of the large drapery establishments, the "Louvre" and "Pygmalion," were surrounded by Guards, and then carefully searched in order that all assistants between the ages of 17 and 35 might be arrested and enrolled, *nolens volens*, in one or another battalion. General business was, of course, at a standstill. There was no trade except in the absolutely necessary commodities of life. Merchants and shopkeepers were naturally greatly hampered by the suppression of the postal service. Some of them interviewed both the Versailles and the Paris authorities on the subject, and obtained leave to establish a private service. But this was prevented by the continuation of hostilities, and the only arrangement that became possible was that letters might be posted and received at Saint-Denis, as I mentioned in my previous chapter.

On the morning of April 4, Citizen Lissagaray, who is known as the author of an extremely mendacious history of the Commune, published in a paper to which he had given the significant title of *L'Action*, a demand that all journals which were in any degree hostile to the revolutionary *regime* should be immediately suppressed. That same afternoon Ferré, Rigault, and Chalin issued a decree ordering some of

the Commune's commissaries to proceed to the printing-works of the *Journal des Débats*, *Le Constitutionnel*, and *Paris-Journal*, and there break up the forms, seal up the presses, and generally take all necessary measures to prevent those three papers from being published. At the same time all printers were forbidden to assist them in any shape or way. In consequence of these measures seven other journals * at once suspended publication. That old Royalist organ, *La Gazette de France*, had already "emigrated" to Versailles, and *Le Gaulois*—edited in those days by my friend Edmond Tarbé, and not by the notorious Meyer of more recent years—was likewise installed in the city of Louis XIV. Thus the number of independent newspapers appearing in Paris was greatly reduced. Doubtless one could not always be certain that the information they supplied was in every respect accurate; but it was at least a great deal more reliable than that which one found in the organs of the Commune. Never, indeed, did the partisans of any revolutionary *régime* indulge in such a debauch of mendacity.

A few members of the Commune were already feeling disgusted at the turn which affairs were taking. On April 5, for instance, Ulysse Parent resigned his seat in compliance with "the dictates of his conscience." That very same day, however, Henri Rochefort, who had returned to Paris to revive and edit his recently-suppressed journal *Le Mot d'Ordre*, published in it the memorable article which led to the demolition of Thiers' house. I need no excuse, I think, for giving an English version of that effusion here:—

* *L'Union*, *Le Monde*, *Le Français*, *Le Peuple Français*, *La Liberté*, *L'Ami de la France*, and *Le Pays*.

THE DEFENDERS OF PROPERTY.

Well-fed, well-lodged, well-warmed in that beautiful Palace of Versailles, which was formerly inhabited by the Great King who presided over the "Dragonnades," the members of the Government of Seine-et-Oise (!) continue to send bullets flying upon passers-by of both sexes, and to damage houses which do not belong to them. To fire upon women and children is perhaps in the order of things, but to rip up houses is serious on the part of reactionaries whose one thought should be to protect Property. M. Thiers owns a marvellous mansion on the Place Saint-Georges, replete with all sorts of works of art. M. Picard (Minister of the Interior) owns three houses which bring him in large rentals. M. Favre (Minister of Foreign Affairs) has a sumptuous dwelling-place in the Rue d'Amsterdam belonging to him. What would these statesmen-houseowners say if Paris replied to their destructiveness with pick-axes, and if, for each house in Courbevoie which might be struck by a shell, one should demolish a wall of the palace in the Place Saint-Georges or of the mansion in the Rue d'Amsterdam? I am well acquainted with these great politicians who make such a show of disinterestedness at the gaming-table of the Tribune. The goods of this world are of far more import to them than one might infer from their heads which they carry in the clouds. I do not know how these dreamers manage it, but after a couple of months of office they all have incomes of £8000 a year! I am convinced, then, that at the first news of his door-knocker being damaged, M. Thiers would give orders to cease fire. Even should we be called Tamerlane we confess that such reprisals would not be particularly repugnant to us, if there were not one serious objection to them. On hearing that popular justice had demolished M. Thiers's house, which cost £80,000, the Versailles Assembly would immediately vote him another one which would cost £120,000, and as the taxpayers would have to foot the bill we are compelled to discounsel that method of expiation.

HENRI ROCHEFORT.

The article, as the reader will perceive, was very artfully worded, and Rochefort, when subsequently defending himself, relied particularly on its concluding words. Nevertheless, at what was undoubtedly a dangerous moment, the article, generally, conveyed a suggestion to the Commune, and the Commune soon acted upon it, regardless of Rochefort's final adverse pronouncement. It was this affair of Thiers's house, more than anything else, which led to his transportation to New Caledonia.

But a much more serious matter than the demolition of any house was the Commune's decree respecting the arrest and detention of hostages. This did not precede but followed the incarceration of the Archbishop, Mgr. Surat, and others, but was, nevertheless, made applicable to them. It appeared in the Commune's official organ on April 6, when also a proclamation was issued mendaciously asserting that the Versailles troops were marching on Paris carrying the white flag of the Bourbons and shouting, "Vive le Roi!" "If," continued this factum, "our enemies, disregarding the habitual customs of warfare between civilized peoples, massacre but one more of our soldiers we shall reply by executing an equal or a double number of our prisoners." The decree went even farther than that, for it set forth that every person charged with complicity with the Government of Versailles should be at once arrested, that a *jury d'accusation* should pronounce on the prisoner's guilt within forty-eight hours, that every person respecting whom the jury gave an adverse verdict should become a hostage of the people of Paris, and that every execution of a prisoner of war or partisan of the Commune by the Versailles authorities, should be immediately followed by the execution of a *treble* (not *double*) number of hostages, to be designated by drawing lots.

It should be said that at this moment the only prisoners summarily executed by the Versailles troops (apart from the case of "General" Duval) had been army men, that is, deserters who had gone over to the Commune. On the other hand, there were certainly some brutal scenes at Versailles whenever Communard prisoners arrived there, the

population of the town often behaving in an abominable manner, and the soldiers in charge of the captives having great difficulty in protecting them from assault. One of the brothers Barrère, either Albert, the lexicographer, or Camille, the present French Ambassador at Rome, wrote to the papers protesting against the treatment meted out to the insurgent prisoners, declaring that the women of Versailles clawed their faces, and that the authorities shut them up in loathsome cellars. That last statement was untrue.

It was more pleasant to read that Citizen Jules Vincent, the Commune's delegate at the National Library, had arranged with the existing officials, Rathery, Léopold Delisle, Ravenel, Delaborde, Dauban, and others to remain at their posts, confining themselves strictly to the protection of the books, manuscripts, drawings, and prints belonging to the nation. Courbet at this time almost provoked a smile by issuing a proclamation to the artistic world, in which he spoke not only of reopening the museums, but also of holding the usual Salon on a more extensive scale than ever. Men's thoughts, however, were not given to such matters in those hours of civil war.

On the morning of April 6 I was by chance present at a strange spectacle on what was for a long time called the Place du Prince Eugène, but is now the Place Voltaire. A statue of the great French writer and philosopher was already there at the time of the Commune, and for this reason the spot was deemed an appropriate one for the destruction of the guillotine. At that period executions took place publicly on the Place de la Roquette, and the so-called *bois de justice* were kept in a kind of shed

in the Rue de la Folie-Regnault. Thither that morning, at a very early hour, repaired a band of zealous National Guards and others who speedily forced the door of the storeplace and carried the various sections of the apparatus into the street, whence they removed them to the open space in front of the statue of Voltaire. Some delay then ensued, presumably in order that the Commune's full authority for the destruction of the guillotine might be obtained. At all events the bonfire was not lighted until about ten o'clock, and when by chance I reached the scene half an hour later (whilst bound for Père-Lachaise cemetery, as I shall presently relate) the hated "instrument of justice" was already partially consumed. The delight of the crowd at this unexpected *auto-da-fe* was manifest. To hear folks talk one might have thought the death-penalty for ever abolished; but, as Rochefort very sensibly remarked in *Le Mot d'Ordre*, what was the use of destroying the guillotine merely to replace it by guns? I believe that half a dozen blades were removed from the Rue de la Folie-Regnault at the same time as the instrument's woodwork. What became of five of them I cannot say, but some years later a Parisian collector showed me a guillotine-blade which, said he, was the very one with which the notorious murderer Troppmann had been decapitated. That it was one of the blades used by Heindreich, the "Monsieur de Paris" of that period, I verily believe; but only a very sanguine collector could have maintained that it had served to cut off the head of some particular criminal.

From the Place Voltaire I repaired to Père-Lachaise to witness the funeral of some thirty unrecognized Communards who had fallen in the

recent fighting. The Commune had declared that it would provide for the burial of all the dead who remained unrecognized and unclaimed by their families,* and also that any wounded man, if partially or totally incapacitated from working, should receive a pension ranging from £12 to £48 per annum. Seven members of the Commune, all of them wearing their red scarves fringed with gold, attended this first solemn funeral of the unknown victims of the civil war. There were three vehicles, each carrying some ten coffins. A military band was in attendance, and there was naturally a numerous escort of Guards, with *immortelles* in their gun-barrels. The procession came by way of the principal boulevards as far as the Château d'Eau (now Place de la République) and then turned into the Boulevard Voltaire, passing on its way the ashes of the departed guillotine. At the graveside Delescluze, who was no mean speaker, delivered an oration.

Day by day, Paris was becoming more and more deserted. The hostages decree was of a nature to alarm all people of any prominence, and particularly the clergy, as the Communalist press declared that at least 500 priests ought to be imprisoned. Young men, moreover, found themselves confronted by Cluseret's decree that all who were between the ages of seventeen and thirty-five should be enrolled in the National Guard.† In one or another connection not a day elapsed without several arrests. An order went forth to imprison M. Groult, a famous maker of *pâtes alimentaires*, and, as he could not be

* It was decided that all bodies should be deposited at the Hôtel-Dieu and photographed for purposes of identification. Some of these extremely rare photographs are now in the possession of the Rev. R. Ussher, Vicar of Westbury, Bucks.

† A few days later a second decree raised the ages to 19 and 40.

found, it was declared that his wife and children should be apprehended unless he paid a fine of 100,000 francs. Henri Vrignault, editor of *Le Bien Public*, was also "wanted," but contrived to make his escape. Richardet of *Le National* was arrested on applying for a passport to leave Paris. Paul Dupont, the eminent printer, was sought for, but happened to be already at Versailles. Lacroix, the well-known publisher of many of Victor Hugo's works, and the traffic-manager of the Western Railway Line were less fortunate. Further, a fresh raid was made on Peters's Restaurant, now the Café Américain, on the Boulevards, in the hope of apprehending a large number of "reactionaries" at one swoop. Among the priests who were incarcerated were the septuagenarian Abbé Deguerry, Curé of the Madeleine, whose house was entered and plundered at dead of night, the Curés of Saint-Séverin, Saint-Laurent, and Montmartre, and the director of the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice.

The charge preferred against these priests and others was invariably the same—namely, that they were in communication with Versailles and must therefore be held as hostages. There were also endless perquisitions. One evening a band of Guards invaded the asylum kept by the Little Sisters of the Poor at Picpus. The old men and old women who were sheltered there had just retired to bed when the Superior was summoned to appear before the chief officer of the detachment. He demanded the community's "treasury," and when he found how little money there was in the house he became amazed. He would not believe what was told him, but insisted on searching the whole building, going with his men into the dormitories where the old

folks slept. They became alarmed on seeing him, and begged right earnestly that the good sisters might be spared. The officer was affected. He had not known what work it was to which those tender-hearted women had dedicated their lives. Everything he saw was a revelation to him, and filled him with shame. In the end he gave back the little money which he had taken, and retired, apologizing for his intrusion. Other communities, however, were far less fortunate.

Meantime the hunt for refractory Guards continued on all sides. Several of the Paris butchers, however, protested so vigorously against their assistants being taken away—threatening, if that were done, to close their shops and sell no meat—that it was decided to dispense journeyman-butchers from service in the Guard. Some similar arrangement was arrived at respecting the bakers, for the Citizen-Members of the Commune had no desire to be starved.* However, they sent some of their myrmidons to the asylum of La Salpétrière, and forced all the young men employed there, to join the National Guard. And still and ever the exodus from Paris continued. A good many young fellows let themselves down from the ramparts at night by means of ropes. Others dressed themselves up as girls, and as I related in a previous chapter, when telling the story of Lucien Marc's escape, they were sometimes detected and marched off in their petticoats to a guard-house. Older people besieged the Prefecture of Police for passports. There were long queues of them as well as scores of waiting vehicles

* Nevertheless, there was trouble with the bakers respecting the Commune's *bons*, which many refused to accept, feeling that these engagements to pay would never be redeemed.

around the statue of Desaix on the old Place Dauphine.

Some women protested against the enrolment of their husbands. They and their children were starving, they declared. Other women, however, joined the Guards, often arraying themselves as *cantinières,* and there was even talk of forming a battalion of Amazons as in the days of the German Siege. A certain Olga Dimitrieff, the mistress of Léo Franckel of the Commune, and a certain widow named Leroy who lived with Franckel's colleague Urbain, were conspicuous among the Communard women of the time. On the other hand, the "ladies of the markets" bridled up when the Commune arrested the Curé of Saint-Eustache, for they wanted to have their usual Easter Mass, and so this priest, as a special favour, was released from custody. If, indeed, the market-women had turned against the Commune there might have been a dearth of all sorts of provisions. This was fully realized by the hungry gentlemen at the Hôtel-de-Ville.

On April 6 the powers of the day issued a special appeal to the provinces, saying to them among other things: "Versailles has been feeding you with falsehood and slander. It began the civil war by slaughtering our advanced posts. Paris does not wish to rule France and assume a dictatorship, which would be the negation of the National sovereignty. You are being deceived when you are told that robbery and murder openly occur in Paris. Never were our streets quieter! For three weeks past not a theft has been committed, not one attempt at murder has taken place. Paris only aspires to establish the Republic and exercise its communal

Burning the Guillotine on the Place Voltaire.

franchise, confining itself to its own autonomy, with full respect for the equal rights of all the other communes of France." The Central Committee of the National Guard (which still existed and often intrigued against the Commune) supported the above proclamation with another of its own; and these effusions were followed by an announcement that although Versailles had appealed to the provinces, the provinces were really supporting Paris. For instance, Limoges, we were told, had proclaimed the Commune and hoisted the red flag. The troops of the Line there had fraternized with the National Guard. Guéret was following that great example. All central France was rising. The men of the Nivernais were ready, and Vierzon (Félix Pyat's birthplace) was guarding the railway-line in order to prevent the Versailles Government from crushing insurgent Toulouse.

It must be said that the men of the Hôtel-de-Ville knew perfectly well what to think of the state of opinion in the provinces. They had revived the press department at the Ministry of the Interior, and were very accurately informed respecting everything which occurred. There was a Paris-press section, a Versailles-press section, a provincial-press section, and a foreign one also. The reports emanating from these sections were drafted in a very impartial manner, and thus, however much the members of the Commune may have tried to deceive the Parisians, they themselves were not deceived at all, but knew right well that the great bulk of public opinion, the whole world over, was strongly against them.

The Limoges rising to which they referred in the proclamation I have quoted, was only a momentary

affair, though it is true that a detachment of infantrymen mutinied. At Lyons, which the Communalist party greatly hoped to capture, relying on the weakness of the mayor of the city, and at Toulouse where they had the support of Duportal, Gambetta's prefect during the latter stages of the war, the attempts at insurrection were soon suppressed. The authorities had even less trouble at Bordeaux, Narbonne, and Saint-Étienne. The one really serious outbreak in southern France occurred at Marseilles, where the Communalists were headed by a ranting journalist, Gaston Crémieux, who paid for his folly with his life. At the outset his partisans seized the townhall and made the Prefect, Admiral Cosnier, a prisoner. But General Espivent de la Villeboisnet entered the city at the head of a considerable force, drove the insurgents from their positions, and captured the foolish Crémieux. As for the various Communes which were set up in the environs of Paris, as at Clichy-Levallois and Saint-Mandé, they were by no means spontaneous affairs; but were simply brought about by battalions of Parisian Guards who marched to these localities, hoisted red flags over the town-halls, made pompous speeches, requisitioned a variety of commodities and at the same time arrested all the young men they could find, with the intention of taking them to Paris and compelling them, if possible, to fight against the country's legitimate Government.

VII

THE BOMBARDMENT BEGINS—MORE PERQUISITIONS AND ARRESTS

Fresh Efforts of the Paris Deputies—MacMahon's Army—The Fighting at Neuilly and elsewhere—Shells in the Champs Élysées—Bergeret removed from Command—A Descent on Notre Dame—Easter in Paris—The Troops take Neuilly—Easter Monday and the Gingerbread Fair—The Struggle for Neuilly resumed—More Barricades in Paris—Telescopic Views of the Versaillese Batteries—The Communards retake and again lose Neuilly—Auteuil and Passy Bombarded—Railway Lines cut—A Warning to British Subjects—A Decree for the demolition of the Vendôme Column—More Perquisitions and Arrests—Letters from the Archbishop and Abbé Deguerry—Gustave Chaudey and other Hostages—The Story of the "Vicomte de Bragelonne."

THE deputies of Paris had in all good faith striven to prevent a calamitous civil war, and although it had broken out and seemed likely to continue until the arbitrament of the sword decided not which party was right, but which party was the stronger, the efforts of several of these deputies for the promotion of peace never slackened. Among the notable men who early in April appealed both to the Versailles Government and the Paris Commune to stop the effusion of blood were Louis Blanc, Henri Brisson, Edmond Adam, Tirard, Farcy, Peyrat, Langlois, and Dorian. But both sides were now, so to say, thoroughly wound up, and neither would concede anything to the other. So the struggle continued. Without doubt, the Commune was an absolutely illegal government, but there are times when, in

the general interest, it is advisable to overlook much which in a strict sense may be unlawful. The Versailles authorities were the less disposed to negotiate, however, as, by arrangement with Germany, many of the French prisoners of war in that country had been released and sent home. They included the men of Metz and Sedan, the old Imperial Guard and the veteran linesmen of the defunct Empire; and their return to France, after long months of captivity, proved such an accession of strength to the Versailles Government that, feeling certain of success, it scorned to treat with the rebels.

Marshal MacMahon, who had been seriously wounded at Sedan,* but had now quite recovered from his injuries, accepted the chief command of the Versailles forces. They comprised three corps of troops, two of infantry, and one of cavalry. At the head of the former were Generals de Ladmirault and de Cissey. The last was under the orders of General du Barail. Each corps was provided with artillery, and there was a reserve force composed of the troops which General Vinoy commanded. Towards the end of April two other corps were added to the Government Army, one under General Clinchant and the other under General Douay—this last the officer whose march to Sedan is so ably described in the pages of Zola's novel, "The Downfall."

On April 7 the fighting in the direction of Neuilly was at first limited to an artillery duel. On the south-west of Paris the fort of Issy was cannonaded by the redoubt of Châtillon, and there were also sundry skirmishes between the regulars

* For an account of his misadventure, see my book, "Republican France," p. 134.

and the federals.* When I went down the Avenue de la Grande Armée that day I met many heavily-laden removal-vans making their way into the interior of Paris. People were fleeing in alarm from Neuilly, Boulogne-sur-Seine and Asnières. It was difficult to obtain permission to go out of Paris by the Maillot gate of the fortifications. Even the women who wished to take food to their husbands who were fighting at Neuilly, had to be provided with *laisser-passers*. A battery placed outside the Porte Maillot was trying to contend with the Versaillese batteries installed at Puteaux and Courbevoie. The Avenue de la Grande Armée was again crowded with spectators, watching the smoke and listening to the reports of the guns. Every now and again an ambulance-van came along, conveying wounded men or corpses to the Hôpital Beaujon; for the losses of the National Guards were heavy by reason of their very temerity. It could not be said that these Communard soldiers were cowards. They fought enthusiastically for their cause, however wrong it may have been.

But the regular troops steadily gained ground in and near the long Avenue de Neuilly which stretches from the Porte Maillot to the Seine, and at about nine o'clock that evening the first Versaillese shells fell within the Paris ramparts. An hour later all became quiet once more, but in the small hours of the morning, after snatching a little sleep at the flat of my friend, Captain Bingham,† in the

* It may be convenient at times to describe the Communards as federals, that being indeed the name which they often took, belonging as they did, to the Federation of the National Guard.

† The Paris correspondent of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. See "My Days of Adventure."

Rue de Tilsit, near the Arc de Triomphe, I was awakened by a loud cannonade. The duel between the Porte Maillot and the Mont Valérien batteries had begun again, in the direction of Neuilly and the Bois de Boulogne, and the clear night sky was obscured by clouds of smoke. I went with a friend down the Avenue de la Grande Armée, and, thanks to my Communalist passport, we contrived to pass through the Porte Maillot and go as far as the Neuilly market-place. On our way we saw several damaged houses, and others plainly shook every time there came a discharge from the Porte Maillot battery. About seven o'clock, however, the firing ceased, perhaps because the gunners on both sides were tired and eager for some breakfast.

Later in the morning the Government troops, after driving the federals towards the Porte Maillot, advanced as far as the Rond Point in the Avenue de Neuilly, and then their shells began to rain upon the Avenue de la Grande Armée, some of them not only reaching the Arc de Triomphe, but falling beyond it in the Champs Élysées. One of them struck the arch, doing, however, little damage, and others hit the mansions in the vicinity. Quite a panic prevailed in the Avenue de la Grande Armée where several people were killed by splinters of the exploding projectiles. Some of the Versaillese gunners, moreover, used shrapnel with deadly effect. A baker was killed, and his wife and his little girl were wounded, the last-mentioned having a leg broken. Thus matters continued throughout the morning, a shell occasionally striking the Arc de Triomphe and then exploding.

In the Avenue des Ternes we found a number of ambulance-vans assembled, and every now and

again one of them went off towards the Hôpital Beaujon with a freight of wounded Guards and civilians. I mentioned in my previous book that the German bombardment of Paris did some little damage to property, and resulted in the death of a hundred and the wounding of about two hundred people. Its effect was absolutely trivial in comparison with the destruction and the loss of life occasioned by the French bombardment of the capital. The number of victims was then at least eight times as large, and the damage to buildings was infinitely more severe. During the German Siege, moreover, the western districts of Paris had remained virtually immune, protected as they were by Mont Valérien; but now they were being bombarded by the batteries installed in that fortress and on other positions, and suffered far more than the southern districts, for instance, had suffered from the German fire a few months previously.

When I went to the Ambulance de la Presse in the Avenue d'Eylau—now Avenue Victor Hugo—I found it crowded with wounded men (at least two hundred and fifty) who were being attended by those famous medical men, Drs. Ricord, Demarquay, and others. The Porte Maillot batteries were undoubtedly the objective of the Versaillese fire, but, somehow or other, the gunners at Mont Valérien, the Rond Point de Neuilly, and elsewhere, could not get an accurate range. Their shrapnel frequently travelled far beyond the ramparts, and burst at last in the Champs Élysées, where, among others, the father of Mlle. Thiébault of the Grand Opera was killed.

Stormy was the Commune's sitting on that Saturday preceding Easter Sunday. Bergeret was

removed from his position as Commandant de la Place de Paris and replaced by Ladislas Dombrowski, so often confounded with his brother Yaroslaw, the more prominent of the Commune's Polish military men. Cluseret, who at this time was Delegate at War, sent the Commune a report respecting Bergeret in which it was asserted that he, Eudes, and Duval, had covered the insurrection with ridicule by aping aristocratic military manners and surrounding themselves with absurd and pompous staffs. By their folly, too, a fortnight had been lost, a large number of lives sacrificed, and disorder and indiscipline fostered. Bergeret, added Cluseret, had also positively refused to obey his orders, setting his personal ambition above duty and the general welfare. It was therefore imperative that he should be placed under arrest. The Commune, previously infatuated with Bergeret's alleged merits, agreed with Cluseret, and gave effect to his report.

Let me now go back to Good Friday (April 8) when the Government artillery was hotly bombarding western Paris. On that day sacred among all others, and respected even by many who are not believers, a so-called commissary of police, attended by a party of Guards, marched into the Cathedral of Notre Dame and expressed an intention to carry off all the precious reliquaries and vessels of gold and silver—briefly, everything of value—stored in the sacristy of the ancient fane. In all haste the alarmed and distracted priests sent a messenger to the Hôtel-de-Ville, entreating that such spoliation and desecration might not be carried into effect; and presently a delegate of the Commune arrived to inquire into the matter. A great many valuable objects had already been placed in a van in readiness

A Raid on the Little Sisters of the Poor.

for removal, but the delegate considered that the commissary's mandate (signed, I believe, by Raoul Rigault) was not in order, and therefore gave instructions that everything should be replaced in the sacristy. This was done to the great discomfiture of the would-be spoliators, and the satisfaction of the cathedral clergy. On the following day, however, Henri Rochefort declared in his journal that it was only right that all the precious vessels of gold and silver, enriched with gems, should be removed from the churches. The Christ, he wrote, was born in a cow-shed, and all that a church required, apart from its walls and its seats, was—a bundle of straw! That article, like the one on Thiers's house, ultimately led to Rochefort's transportation.

Easter Sunday came, but not a church-bell in the whole of Paris sent forth a peal of gladness. The church-doors were opened furtively, and closed directly the rites began. In a few instances there was no service whatever. Elsewhere, all was conducted with a mournful solemnity. At Saint-Eustache, whither I went though I am not a Catholic, the Curé, who had been released at the intercession of the "Ladies of the Markets" (Les Dames de la Halle), officiated before a large congregation of his parishioners. Some of those who were present (myself included) fancied that the Curé might make some allusion to the times through which we were passing and his recent experiences. But his sermon was entirely of a religious character.

Whilst the Easter Mass was being celebrated, bands of Communalists were busy erecting or strengthening barricades in the Rue Royale, the Rue de Rivoli, and the Rue Castiglione; and west of Paris the guns were still and ever booming. During

the afternoon the cannonade became extremely violent, and towards the evening a report spread that the Guards had been forced to retreat and that the Government troops now held the whole of the Avenue de Neuilly from the bridge to the Porte Maillot. This was true, but they did not attempt to assault the gate, within which the Communalists had lately reared formidable defensive works. My father, my brother, and myself tried to reach the Porte Maillot, but a cordon of Guards was drawn across the upper part of the Champs Élysées, and permission to pass was peremptorily refused to everybody who could not prove that he or she lived near or beyond the Arc de Triomphe. Many people were out and about that day. A friend told me that the Luxembourg gardens were as crowded with promenaders as in the palmiest days of peace. In the evening, too, the main Boulevards were thronged; but at eleven o'clock detachments of Guards appeared and ordered every café to close, whether the customers liked it or not.

It had been decreed that complementary elections for the Commune—to fill seats vacated by previous resignations—should take place on the morrow, Monday, April 10; but a proclamation informed us that these elections were indefinitely postponed as so many thousands of citizens were unable to vote, being engaged in the important duty of defending the city from the butchers of Versailles. This, however, proved no impediment to the holding of the annual Gingerbread Fair on and about the Place du Trône, now the Place de la Nation. One found there nearly as many booths as usual, and acrobats, conjurors, fat ladies, and other monstrosities, were not wanting. Paris always seeks diversion,

even in the midst of her most tragical experiences. It is true, of course, that the Place du Trône (which is on the north-east side of the city) was a far cry from the bombarded western districts.

In that direction, although the Government troops had cleared the Avenue de Neuilly of National Guards they found themselves in a very difficult position. The avenue is quite straight, and the Communalist batteries of the Porte Maillot fired down it incessantly. The regulars, therefore, abandoned the avenue and took to the side-streets, the Jardin d'Acclimatation and the Bois de Boulogne. There they had to contend with a number of the Commune's Francs-tireurs and so-called Vengeurs. Skirmishing went on in the Bois as well as in the streets and gardens of Neuilly, under the bright spring sky and amidst all the young blossoms and fresh green foliage. In vain did the scent of the lilac-bushes strive to contend with the smell of powder. It was the latter which the mild April breezes wafted incessantly hither and thither, whilst clouds of smoke enveloped each budding plant like deadly blight.

The firing still continued at night time, when on either side small parties of men went prowling about, but were often fired upon from some shuttered window or loopholed wall. If the Government troops were in a difficult position, some of the Communalists were almost in jeopardy, for although they still held the village of Asnières it seemed as if they might be cut off from Paris by the detachments of soldiers scouring Neuilly on the one hand and Levallois-Perret on the other. A good many of the residents of those localities, who had hidden themselves away in their cellars, were still there,

in semi-obscurity and a state of semi-starvation, not daring to venture forth in search of food, which, moreover, they might not have been able to procure as every shop was closed.

The 11th of April was a quieter day than the preceding ones. The Communalists were busy installing heavy guns on the Trocadero, whence they hoped to be able to fire on Mont Valérien. But their shots had little or no effect. As a precaution, they set up another battery in the grounds of La Muette at the Auteuil end of the Bois de Boulogne, and they reinforced the much-damaged forts of Issy and Vanves with additional artillery. That same day they secured another important hostage in the person of M. Tresca, the director of the École des Arts et Métiers, who was arrested because he would not divulge where certain weapons were concealed. It was also on April 11, I think, that M. Bonjean, the President of the Cour de Cassation, was discovered and sent to Mazas. That day Rochefort issued a statement saying that he could not be a candidate at the complementary elections for the Commune, as he was in a very weak state of health and was forbidden to fatigue himself by speaking or sitting up late at night. In point of fact the famous "Lanternier" was beginning to trim his sails, probably feeling that he had gone quite far enough in his support of the Commune. He even attacked it for issuing no reports of its sittings and thereby playing the part of an occult power.

Although, however, it still kept its deliberations secret, the Commune was becoming more and more prodigal in decrees and proclamations. One of the former set forth that a pension of £24 per annum should be paid to the widow of every National

Guard killed in action, and that 365 francs a year should be allotted to each orphan until he or she attained the age of eighteen. On the other hand, the Paris Freemasons were now raising their voices against a prolongation of the fratricidal struggle. They issued a manifesto calling upon both sides to seek a basis of peace which might prove to be the dawn of a new era. To this the Commune's more prominent women-folk replied with an appeal to all their sisters to support the efforts of their heroic brothers. Peace, indeed, seemed to be further off than ever, for Yaroslaw Dombrowski, whom Cluseret had now appointed to the chief command on the west of Paris, had already reinforced the Communalist detachments stationed at Asnières under Okolowitz, and was strengthening the Porte Maillot defences, and making reconnaissances through Levallois-Perret by way of Les Ternes.

Inside Paris many fresh barricades were being set up. Even the eastern districts which as yet were not threatened by the Versaillese troops began to bristle with defences. There were barricades on the Place Voltaire, in the Rue Saint-Maur, the Rue de Popincourt, and the Rue d'Oberkampf. On the south side of Paris one now found barricades in the Rue Saint Jacques and on the Place du Panthéon. Gaillard *père*, the Commune's Vauban, was being assisted on those points by Georges Cavalié, the notorious Pipe-en-Bois, who, a few years previously, whilst he was a student at the École Polytechnique, had leapt into celebrity by leading the cabal against the Goncourt's play, *Henriette Maréchal*, at the Comédie Française. It was, too, this same Cavalié, who, as an attaché to Gambetta at Tours, during the latter part of the Franco-German War, had one

day slapped Lord Lyons on the shoulder, and suggested to him that they should go and drink a *bon bock* together, whilst waiting for the young Dictator, whom the British Ambassador had called to see. His Lordship, however, courteously declined the invitation. If he had had his favourite and historic dog with him at the time, that sagacious and devoted animal would probably have punished Pipe-en-bois for his impertinence by abstracting a more or less succulent morsel from some fleshy part of his person.

But let me get back to the fighting. It rained rather heavily on the evening of April 11, and it was under a dark, heavy, lowering sky that firing was resumed from nine until eleven o'clock. That very day, I believe, MacMahon had assumed active command of the Versailles army. The artillery of Cissey's corps cannonaded Forts Issy and Vanves vigorously. An attempt was also made to seize the Communalist positions in advance of Montrouge, but this was repulsed. The people, who, in the palmy days of peace, had set up telescopes in one or another Parisian square and charged the public ten centimes apiece for a brief inspection of the beauties of Venus or the moon, and who afterwards, during the first siege, had turned their lenses upon the German positions around Paris, thereby earning a very fair livelihood, were now showing us the Versaillese batteries; and many sightseers repaired to the Point-du-Jour viaduct in order to take a peep at the guns which were cannonading Issy, Vanves, and Passy. Those batteries found yet another objective in the Ternes and Levallois districts, whence, on the night of the 11th, many wounded were conveyed to the now vanished Palais de l'Industrie in the Champs

Élysées, the Beaujon hospital being quite full of patients. The federals now found it necessary to fortify the Villiers gate, and Montmartre was almost totally depleted of its once formidable arsenal. Every now and again I had to call upon an artist there, and found the district full of life, the shops open, and the streets thronged with women and children, the whole contrasting strongly with what I saw in the bombarded western quarters of Paris.

The Government troops had entrenched themselves as best they could in the positions which they held at Neuilly, the recapture of which suburb became the paramount desire of the Communalists. The first attempt which Dombrowski made with that object early on the morning of April 12, did not succeed ; but reinforcements reached him during the afternoon, and the regular army then had to seek cover in the Bois de Boulogne. The various barricades and earthworks which the troops had thrown up, were seized by the Communalists and utilized by them. A certain number of prisoners were also taken and sent into Paris, but the Commune's statement that 4000 regulars had fallen into its hands was gross exaggeration.

Momentarily discomfited at Neuilly, the Versailles commanders turned their attention to other parts of the western side of Paris, and on the 12th a regular bombardment of Auteuil and Passy began. Other incidents in the new siege, that day, were the destruction of the Suresnes lock on the Seine by the incessant cannonade, and the collapse of the Porte Maillot tunnel of the Chemin de Fer de Ceinture —this also being a result of the vigorous bombardment. At a very early hour on the following morning the troops were put to the task of recapturing

Neuilly. A fierce fight went on there all day, and at about nine o'clock in the evening the federals, in spite of all the reinforcements which they had received, were compelled to withdraw from the positions gained by them on the previous day. They were, indeed, fairly exhausted. Nevertheless, they again brought a few more prisoners into Paris. In the direction of Passy there was further bombardment during the day, and a number of Versaillese shells fell on the Quai de Billy.

It was also on April 13 that the Lyons and Orleans railway lines were finally cut, so that only those of the north and the east, where the Germans were stationed, remained to us as direct routes of communication. For the first time we began to fear a shortage of food. So greatly, however, had the population of Paris declined that the consumption of bread had fallen to about sixty per cent. of the average quantity. With regard to the lighting of the streets the Commune reassured us by stating that supplies of coal were constantly reaching the city by the Northern Railway, and that the Gas Company held a stock of eighteen million kilogrammes. The Hôtel-de-Ville was still and ever issuing edicts. Among those which appeared that day was one authorizing Courbet to organize a Salon, as he desired to do, and to re-open the museums and allow students to copy pictures as in more peaceful times; and there was also a decree threatening drastic punishment for indiscipline and refractoriness among the National Guards. Moreover, Mr. (later Sir) Edward Malet now issued a warning to British subjects that if they should remain in Paris it would be at their own risk and peril, and that if they should delay leaving the city, they might soon

Return of the Wounded to Paris.

find it impossible to do so. As a matter of fact, all the English, excepting the newspaper men and some of those who had important business interests in Paris, had already taken their departure.

In addition to the above, the *Journal Officiel* published on April 13 a memorable decree, which ran as follows: "THE COMMUNE OF PARIS, Considering that the imperial Column on the Place Vendôme is a monument of barbarianism, a symbol of brute force and false glory, an emblem of militarism and of the negation of international rights, a permanent insult offered by conquerors to the conquered, a perpetual denial of one of the three great principles of the French Republic—Fraternity—hereby decrees: The column on the Place Vendôme shall be demolished." This, however, was not carried into effect until some weeks later, as I shall presently relate.

Let me now deal with some of the arrests and perquisitions which I have not yet mentioned. The Lazarist and Augustine convents were raided on April 6. A curate of Notre Dame de Lorette was arrested on the 12th, when, also, a band of Guards descended on the headquarters of the Christian Brothers in the Rue Oudinot, and finding that the Superior, Brother Philippe, was absent, apprehended his assistant, Brother Calixte. On the same day the traffic-manager and the chief-inspector of the Northern Railway were arrested, but for fear that such an important means of communication with the outside world might suddenly be closed, the Commune ordered that these particular prisoners should be released.* On the other hand, Abbé Miquel,

* The Western Railway had been cut at a very early date in the insurrection. The Lyons and the Orleans lines being likewise cut on April 13,

of the church of Saint-Philippe du Roule, was placed under lock and key, and the same fate befell the Curé of Saint-Roch and one of his *vicaires*. At this date, the middle of April, the Commune already held some sixty priests or other ecclesiastics in captivity, most of them being lodged in the Conciergerie prison, where—on the ground, perhaps, that all such reverend gentlemen were wont to fast—they were kept on remarkably short commons, and even denied the use of knives and forks, having to partake of their food with the assistance of their fingers and a few wooden spoons.

At the time when the Curé of Saint-Roch was arrested, a descent was made on an asylum which depended for support on the charity of the ladies of that parish, and a sum of 1800 francs being found on the premises it was immediately confiscated. Even the poor-boxes of the church of Saint-Éloi were broken open, and their contents abstracted. I remember also that the rascals who garrisoned the Élysée district, forced their way into the Péreire mansion in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, ransacked it, and loaded two removal-vans with a great variety of things, including all the wine which they found in the cellars.

The Commune gave several of the imprisoned ecclesiastics to understand that the Versaillese authorities were perpetrating the most abominable deeds, such as summarily shooting all the National Guards, including the wounded, who fell into their hands. Had this been true there would have been no captives in the improvised prisons of Versailles, and only wounded army-men in the town's ambulances,

as mentioned on p. 184, only the Northern and Eastern lines, guarded at certain points by the Germans, remained working.

whereas both the prisons and the ambulances already contained a considerable number of Communards. But the ecclesiastics who were in durance had no means of ascertaining the truth, and it thus happened that the newspapers suddenly printed letters from Archbishop Darboy and Abbé Deguerry, protesting against the acts of barbarity imputed to the soldiers and appealing to Thiers, as Chief of the State, to put a stop to them. The Communalists naturally made much of those letters, but were by no means minded to set Darboy and Deguerry at liberty and thereby enable them to ascertain the falsity of the information on which their letters were based.

The detention of the Archbishop and other Roman Catholic ecclesiastics moved the Protestant clergy of Paris to expostulate and solicit the release of the captives. So far, the Protestant ministers themselves had not been interfered with, but they felt compelled to speak out in presence of all that was taking place; and their intervention was the more creditable as it exposed them likewise to incarceration. The principal French pastors who signed the protest and appeal were M. Monod and M. de Pressensé—father of the politician of more recent years. Among the foreign Protestant clergy who participated in the affair was my old friend Dr. Forbes, of the well-known English church in the Rue d'Aguesseau. The Commune, however, steadily refused to liberate its hostages.

It was more indulgent to the theatrical profession. In fact, as the company of the Théâtre du Vaudeville had previously arranged to give some performances in London, it graciously authorized it to depart by the Chemin de fer du Nord, without

even demanding that the younger actors should remain in Paris to serve in the National Guard. On the other hand, it showed no more favour to opposition journalists than it did to ecclesiastics. Not a day passed but the ogres of the time breakfasted off priests and supped off newspaper-men.

In the *Père Duchêne*, Vermesch or Humbert started a virulent campaign against Gustave Chaudey, a vigorous and courageous writer on the staff of *Le Siècle*—a well-known Republican organ, indeed the only one in Paris during some years of the Second Empire. The *Père Duchêne's* campaign was obviously intended to bring about Chaudey's arrest. Nevertheless, like Archbishop Darboy, whose fate he ultimately shared, he refused to leave Paris or even to go into hiding there. In lieu thereof, he replied in *Le Siècle* to the charges preferred against him by his traducers. He had been an *adjoint* or assessor to Jules Ferry whilst the latter was Mayor of Paris; and the principal accusation against him was that at the last revolutionary rising during the German Siege (that of January 22, '71) he had given the order to fire which resulted in the killing or wounding of several insurrectionists on the Place de l'Hôtel-de-Ville. There was no truth in the charge, for at the time when the firing began, Chaudey, instead of being on the square, was in a first-floor room of the municipal building. His destruction had been decided upon, however, for his powerful pen was like a thorn in the Commune's side; and thus on April 12 he was arrested at the office of *Le Siècle* and carried off to prison.

Two days previously a similar fate had befallen a man with whom I was well acquainted. Most of my readers must have some knowledge of the elder

Dumas' romance, "Le Vicomte de Bragelonne," which follows "The Three Musketeers" and "Twenty Years After." The Vicomte of the story is supposed to be the son of "Athos," and is brought up with Louise de la Vallière, with whom he falls in love. Whilst he is absent at the wars, however, she becomes the mistress of Louis XIV, and when Raoul de Bragelonne finds that he has lost her he goes off to fight the Arabs, and dies in battle, sword in hand. There was, of course, a real Vicomte de Bragelonne, who was undoubtedly La Vallière's first lover, and of whom Louis XIV became jealous, as I mentioned in a previous book of mine.* But, as he left descendants, I presume that he consoled himself for the loss of Mlle. de la Vallière by marrying some other young person. In any case, in the days of the second Empire there flourished in Paris a certain M. Monnot de Balathier-Bragelonne, commonly known as the Vicomte de Bragelonne, and claiming to descend from La Vallière's early lover. He was by profession a journalist.

Most people will remember that the late Sir George Newnes made a fortune by producing the periodical called *Tit-Bits*. Long before his time, however, that is as far back as 1828, that famous French journalist Émile de Girardin acquired means and notoriety by founding a journal which he entitled *Le Voleur*—the Thief. It was made up of "snippets" from divers sources, which were rarely if ever acknowledged. Girardin sold *Le Voleur* when in 1836 he founded *La Presse*, the French *Daily Mail* of that period; and *Le Voleur* afterwards passed through several hands until it came at last into those of the Vicomte de Bragelonne. He turned it into *Le*

* See "The Favourites of Louis XIV" (Chatto & Windus), pp. 72, 107.

Voleur illustré, and my father sold him a large number of old wood-blocks and electrotypes of engravings, which he put to use in one or another way. It was under these circumstances that I also became acquainted with M. de Bragelonne, a somewhat podgy, pale-faced man of forty or thereabouts, with a little pointed black moustache.

Now, about the time of the German Siege or the Commune, Paul Dalloz, who, besides controlling *Le Moniteur* and *Le Monde Illustré*, had founded *La Petite Presse* to compete with *Le Petit Journal*, arranged with Bragelonne to edit the last-named of his papers. A little sheet costing but a *sou*, *La Petite Presse* did not discuss politics, but gave from various sources all the news of the day, besides publishing articles of the so-called "popular" kind on literary and scientific subjects. Briefly, it was a very harmless production. Nevertheless, at five o'clock on the evening of April 11, one of the Commune's commissaries, girt with a red sash and accompanied by a party of National Guards, came to the paper's office and demanded to see the editor. When M. de Bragelonne confronted his visitors he was shown a recent number of *La Petite Presse* containing an account of the attempt to pillage the sacristy of Notre Dame,* and he was asked who had supplied him with this article. He replied that it had been extracted from some other paper, the title of which momentarily escaped him. Forthwith he was carried to the Prefecture of Police where the then Chief Commissary, a man named Lardeur, repeated the question previously put to him, he returning the same answer as before. Thereupon he was consigned to a cell at the Dépôt. A member of

* See p. 176, *ante*.

his staff speedily sent the required information to Lardeur; nevertheless, Bragelonne was not released until early on the morning of the 12th, when he was suddenly taken before Raoul Rigault and Dacosta, and required to pledge his solemn word that he would in future print nothing in *La Petite Presse* which might expose him to "the measures necessitated by the state of war."

Now this is what had happened in the interval. The person who had sent Lardeur the required particulars was a journalist named Victor Cochinat. Born at Saint-Pierre on the island of Martinique in December, 1823, he had studied law in Paris and become an advocate there, afterwards returning to his native island, where he was invested with some judicial functions. On losing his post at the accession of Napoleon III, he came back to France, edited for a time the *Journal de Rouen*, and in 1855–56 became one of the principal contributors to Alexandre Dumas' journal *Le Mousquetaire*. Now Cochinat was a mulatto, and bore so great a resemblance to Dumas that a legend sprang up on the Paris Boulevards to the effect that he was really one of Dumas' sons.* Truth to tell, Cochinat never formally denied the impeachment. A very amiable man and a ready writer, he became thoroughly well-known in Paris both as a *boulevardier* and as a journalist. A life of Lacenaire, the poet-assassin, which he contributed serially to *Le Figaro*, sent up that journal's sales by leaps and bounds. Later he was on *Le Petit Journal*, but during the Commune he assisted

* Dumas' negro blood came to him through his grandfather, the Marquis Alexandre Davy de La Pailleterie, taking a negress of San Domingo as his mistress, and having by her a son (afterwards a general-officer) who became Dumas' father.

M. de Balathier-Bragelonne to carry on *La Petite Presse.*

As soon as he heard of his editor's arrest he sent Rigault's commissary the information which had been demanded, hoping that this would ensure the prisoner's immediate release. But once the Commune had a man well under lock and key it was in no hurry to liberate him. At last somebody said to Cochinat: "*Voyons!* you cannot let those people murder Bragelonne. Think what a scandal there would be! There is he—the last descendant of one of our great departed master's chief characters; and, on the other hand, there is yourself—the master's son! Come, you ought to make a supreme effort. Go to see those poeple. You know Rigault personally. Appeal to him to release Bragelonne at once!"

Cochinat put on his hat and with sundry misgivings repaired to the Prefecture of Police. He certainly knew Rigault, as did many other journalists, but his application might only result in his own arrest. However, as he found the Commune's Police Delegate in a fairly amiable mood, he became more hopeful of success. It did not come at once, for Rigault began by saying to him: "What! release that libeller Bragelonne? Are you his confederate? No, no! we don't intend to release him. Besides, he is a Viscount, and we want to add a few aristocrats to the priests we hold."

After a while, however, the terrible delegate softened somewhat, and said: "You seem very anxious about this man. What is he to you? A friend? Bah! we have no time for friendship nowadays. But I think I understand: He is the Vicomte de Bragelonne, and you are one of old

Dumas' bastards. So you want to save him for sentimental reasons! *C'est ça, n'est-ce pas?*"

Cochinat did not deny the imputation, and Rigault went on: "I remember that book, 'The Vicomte de Bragelonne.' It was by no means one of Dumas' best. 'Twenty Years After' was much superior to it. 'Bragelonne' was badly put together. Besides, it turned D'Artagnan into a lecturer and a pimp, and the quarrels between the young King and his mistress were dreadfully monotonous."

Cochinat did his best to speak up for the contemned romance, and at last Rigault said to him: "Well, I will look into the matter, but not to-day. No! it is impossible. I am overburdened with work, and need some relaxation. Come to see me another time. I am off now to have a game of billiards. Have one with me, if you like."

Cochinat, thinking it best to humour him, accepted the proposal. They repaired, if I remember rightly, to a café on the island near the Palais de Justice. It was a house much frequented in those days by men of the law. Play was started, and Rigault won one game and Cochinat another. Honours then being easy, Rigault suggested a third game to decide who should rank as "conqueror." Cochinat, who did not care to prolong the amusement, declared, however, that some work needed his attention, whereupon Rigault, wishing to detain him, exclaimed: "Oh, that may wait. It cannot be very important. I will tell you what I'll do. You wish me to release that puffy friend of yours, Bragelonne. Well, I'll play you another hundred to decide whether he shall be set at liberty or not."

Cochinat was momentarily incredulous. "Do you really mean it?" he asked.

"Of course I do," Rigault retorted. "If you win I will sign an order for the man's release; but if you lose I shall do with him as I please."

Cochinat felt both perplexed and anxious. It was difficult to refuse such an offer. If he did so Bragelonne would remain in durance, and Rigault might meet any further attempt in his favour by saying: "No, no, it is too late now. I offered to play you for his release; but you refused, so I intend to keep him." On the other hand, it was horrible to think that the decision would depend upon his, Cochinat's, skill at play. He and Rigault were very evenly matched. A difference of merely a few points had separated them in each of the previous games. Moreover, coolness is essential at billiards, and Cochinat realized that if he should accept Rigault's offer he would be handicapped by anxiety. "I felt," said he, when he was afterwards telling the story in my presence, "much as William Tell must have felt when he was condemned to shoot the apple from the head of his own son."

Thus it was almost in fear and trembling that Cochinat finally assented to Rigault's offer. The game—played, of course, on one of those little pocketless French tables which only allowed of "cannons" being made—progressed very slowly, Rigault sometimes having a short lead, and Cochinat then securing a similar one. But each time he made a miss Rigault invariably caught him up and even passed him, in such wise that he finally began to despair of winning. Yet he felt it incumbent on him to do so. A man's liberty, perhaps his life, was at stake; and, moreover, how people would deride him should he lose! The blood of all the Dumas seemed to inspire Cochinat to make fresh

endeavours on behalf of the ill-fated Bragelonne. But vainly did he strive! Rigault overtook and passed him yet once again. At last, the thought flashed on him that he might succeed by cheating, if he could not do so by fair play.

In the smaller Parisian cafés of those days, unless billiard-players were accompanied by a friend willing to act as a marker, they usually marked for themselves. In fact, I can only remember a professional marker at the Grand Café on the Boulevards, where Feuloya, Maubant, Nanteuil, and Grévy (afterwards President) played at times for stakes of a thousand francs or so. Now Cochinat and Rigault were marking for themselves, and it was this circumstance (I hope I may be forgiven such a wretched attempt at a pun) which gave the former his cue. With the tip of the one he was holding he contrived on a couple of occasions—when Rigault was not looking—to modify the scores indicated by the *boulier*.

It was impossible to make much alteration. He could only give himself a few points which he had not really won, and he trembled when, after he had done so a second time, Rigault, on glancing at the board, remarked: "*Tiens*, I thought I was leading. You have crept up to me, I see." The matter passed off, however, and Cochinat finally won the game by means of his trickery. Had he not resorted to it he would have been beaten by two or three points.

They sat down and refreshed themselves with *bocks*, Cochinat hoping that Rigault would speedily fulfil his promise. The little Delegate made no sign of doing so, however. In all probability he did not care a rap about the Vicomte de Bragelonne, but he

was, perhaps, slightly annoyed at having lost the game. When Cochinat at last ventured to remind him of their agreement, he exclaimed: "*Vous êtes trop pressé, mon cher!* I told you I did not intend to do any more business to-day. Besides, *la petite Varda* (his mistress, an actress) is expecting me, and one must not keep women waiting."

At this, Cochinat feared that Rigault meant to "spoof" him, and that all his trickery had been in vain. "But you promised——" he began. "Yes, yes," replied the other, "and I mean to keep my word. But Bragelonne needs a lesson. The Commune is not to be libelled with impunity, and he must give me an undertaking to insert no more false news (?) in *La Petite Presse.*" "Oh! he will do that at once!" Cochinat responded eagerly. "Well, then, be at the Dépôt of the Prefecture early to-morrow morning, and I will bind him over."

Thus the alleged son of the great Dumas secured the release of the last of the Bragelonnes. A few months later, when Cochinat was telling the story at a café on the Boulevards, somebody said to him: "It is a pity you did not play Rigault for the release of the Archbishop also." "He would not have taken the offer," replied Cochinat. "Besides, the Commune would have shot Rigault had he lost, and at least have sent me to join Darboy at Mazas." That was likely enough.

For some years longer Cochinat remained in Paris, writing for one and another paper, and figuring conspicuously among the Boulevardian crowd during the afternoon "hour of absinthe." In 1880, however, he returned to the West Indies, and became curator of a library which Schoelcher presented to Fort-de-France, the capital of Martinique. He died on that

island in the autumn of 1886. I was forgetting to mention that his parentage was fully ascertained, and that unless his mother was related to the grandmother of Dumas *père*, there could have been no kinship whatever between him and the Prince of Romancers. But it is well perhaps to let people imagine that you have the blood of a Dumas in your veins when a Vicomte de Bragelonne is in peril.

VIII

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES—A FIGHT AT ASNIÈRES—IN AND OUT OF PARIS—CHURCHES AND CLUBS

A Search at Thiers's House—The Commune and Von der Tann—The Commune's Floating Battery and Gunboats—The Fighting from April 14 to 16—Sundry Communalist Edicts—A Discovery and a Telegram—More Arrests and Perquisitions—A Descent on the Invalides—Napoleon's Sword—An Adventure at Asnières—The Drowning Guards—The Germans at Saint-Denis—The Freemasons strive for Peace—A brief Truce—Levies on Railway Companies—The Burning of Paris predicted—Sittings of the Commune—Churches and Clubs—Louise Michel—The Affaire Blanqui—Downfall of Cluseret.

At about nine o'clock on the morning of April 15 some Communal delegates and a party of National Guards repaired to Thiers's house on the Place Saint-Georges, which is about half-way up the Rue Notre Dame de Lorette as you go in the direction of Montmartre. The concierge almost fainted on seeing her grim-looking visitors, but speedily surrendered the keys which were in her keeping. Forthwith, a perquisition was made throughout the building, which architecturally was an unimposing one, though it was full of valuables. Thiers had collected quite a number of choice Italian bronzes of the Renaissance period. Old porcelain and faïence, carved ivories, engraved rock-crystals, and jades from China and Japan, specimens of Persian art, valuable paintings and engravings were also scattered through the reception-rooms, where much of the furniture was very fine. There was also a

large library, and a collection of documents of historical importance. Soon after the outbreak of the Franco-German War it had occurred to Thiers to write a history of its origin, and in one way or another he assembled a quantity of valuable materials, including secret reports respecting the doings at the Tuileries, the Palais Royal, and several ministries and embassies.

The delegates of the Commune, among whom was Adolphe Clémence,* decided for the moment to remove only the old statesman's papers, which were speedily sent to the Hôtel-de-Ville. The rooms containing curios and other valuables were merely "sealed up" by means of tape and wax affixed to the doors, so as to mark that everything was sequestrated by order of the Commune. For the rest, a posse of Guards was left to watch over the mansion. The removal of the papers was observed by a crowd of people who, according to the Communalist press, frequently expressed their hostility towards "the successor of Moltke the Bombarder."

The fighting between the Parisian and Versaillese forces was still continuing under the more or less watchful eyes of the Germans, who had reinforced several of their positions. From the terrace of the Château of Conflans, at the junction of the Seine and the Marne, officers of the First Bavarian Corps, a part of which now occupied the fort and village of Charenton, east of Paris, frequently whiled away their time by watching the firing in the direction of Montrouge and Châtillon. According to the German press of the period, about the middle of April the Commune actually tried to negotiate with Von der Tann, the Bavarian commander, for the surrender

* See p. 95, *ante*.

of the fort of Charenton, going so far as to offer £80,000 for the privilege of occupying that position as, in certain eventualities, this might facilitate the escape of the leaders of the insurrection. Needless to say, Paschal Grousset's overtures were not entertained. Had the attempt succeeded the requisite money would doubtless have been procured by a levy on the Bank of France.

On April 14 some of the Versailles forces spreading from Gennevilliers to Colombes, vigorously cannonaded the Communalist positions at Asnières, which the Government commanders seemed particularly anxious to secure, as if they intended to cross the Seine at that particular point. At Neuilly it was now impossible for either side to hold the bridge-position, so constant and deadly was the firing. A floating-battery, constructed during the German siege, and subsequently seized by the Federals, was now stationed near the Point-du-Jour viaduct, and fired on the Government position at Clamart, whence Fort Issy was being cannonaded. The answering fire of the floating-battery proved very ineffective, and the men on board ended by arresting their senior officer on the charge that he was a traitor, having had the guns pointed in such a manner as to do little or no damage to the enemy. For a purpose which I will presently explain, I got out of Paris that day by the Billancourt gate, and, leaving the Bois de Boulogne on my right, went towards the Seine, hoping to cross it and reach Saint-Cloud, for I knew that the bridge at that point had been temporarily repaired a short time previously. But I found it impossible to get near the water's edge, and retraced my steps after observing that the Communalists had installed a couple of batteries

A Barricade at Neuilly.

near the bridge with the object of holding the troops in check at that point.

Whilst I followed the Paris quays on my return journey, I observed that the silent battery on the summit of the Trocadero was strongly guarded, and that some of the Commune's gun-boats were toiling slowly up the river in the direction of the Point-du-Jour. They were now commanded by a kind of "Swiss Admiral" named Durassier, who knew nothing of the duties he had undertaken, and who was presently dismissed by the Commune, whereupon the disgraced Lullier * offered to take his place. But the Citizen-Dictators of the Hôtel-de-Ville would have none of him, though, as an ex-naval officer, he was probably the best man that could have been chosen.

We were told by the papers which appeared that evening (April 14) that everything was now quiet at Fort Vanves—so quiet, indeed, that the officers of the National Guard stationed there had obtained a set of bowls from a manufacturer in the Rue des Vinaigriers, and relieved the monotony of life by playing on an improvised green. That same evening, however, Vanves was subjected to a vigorous attack by troops coming from Meudon and Châtillon; and Ledoux and La Cécilia, who commanded respectively the fort and the village, had to apply more than once for reinforcements, with the help of which the Versaillese were ultimately held in check. Nevertheless, on this occasion, as during the previous three or four days, the Communalist losses were severe.

The neighbourhood of the Porte-Maillot was still being bombarded, and the insurgents who, here

* See pp. 49, 67, 79, *ante*.

and there, still strove to reach the Neuilly bridge, found the park of the Château of Neuilly occupied by gendarmes and naval men, who, having loopholed the park-walls, relentlessly picked off all the National Guards who came within range. Now that the Communalists had installed a battery at La Muette, thereby attracting the fire of their antagonists upon that point, people were hastily fleeing from Passy, and the exodus from Les Ternes also continued. But there were still a good many people—including women and children—shut up in Neuilly and unable to get away. Meantime, Paris itself was becoming quite gloomy. Day by day, too, it seemed as if there were fewer and fewer people on the Boulevards. But nature remained quite indifferent to human woe and conflict. The trees were putting forth fresh foliage and birds were merrily mating and nesting in the gardens of the Luxembourg and the Tuileries, whilst, west and south, men still contended in deadly strife for the possession of the city.

On Sunday, April 16, there was some fighting in the direction of Colombes, the Versaillese still striving to advance on Asnières, to resist which endeavour the Communalists sent out some armour-plated engines and trucks—armed with mitrailleuses—which had been prepared during the German siege. From Neuilly, moreover, the fighting now spread to Les Ternes. Bullets whistled along the Avenue du Roule, whilst its terrified inhabitants fled for their lives. Two or three score of famished Neuilly folk were also brought into Paris that day, although shells were again falling in the neighbourhood of the Arc de Triomphe, one of the chief groups of statuary on the huge pile's western face being damaged by an exploding projectile. So many

shells now burst within the ramparts that the *gamins* who, during the German bombardment, had carried on a brisk trade in "splinters," endeavoured to revive it. But money was scarce, and most of the people who might have been willing to purchase such mementoes had quitted Paris.

Several new ambulances for the wounded Communalists had been installed under the direction of Dr. Rastoul, who, in that respect, rendered good service. But he was constantly impeded in his duties and efforts, some of the Guards apparently regarding him with suspicion because he went so frequently in and out of Paris. As the complaints which he addressed to the Commune were repeatedly disregarded he ended by resigning his post. However, not all of the authorities of the hour upheld the Communalist soldiery. Protot, Delegate at Justice, issued a warning that all arrests must be notified to him within twenty-four hours, as otherwise they would be classed as arbitrary, and entail punishment. Moreover, May, the Commune's *intendant général*, forbade any further requisitions of wine and provisions, declaring that the commissariat was amply provided with all necessaries. Cluseret, for his part, rebuked Lacord of the Commune not merely for issuing notices on white paper, which might only be used for official proclamations and decrees, but also for court-martialling refractory Guards without authority to do so.

Each day brought its little incidental occurrences. For instance, the press gave a good deal of publicity to a paltry dispute between Rochefort and Gromier —Félix Pyat's secretary—who had borrowed forty francs from Rochefort in the long-ago and had omitted to repay the money, which he was now

compelled to do. About the same time Rochefort lost his father, the aged playwright of Restoration days, and as fervent a Royalist as his son was a racketty Radical. Then, as sundry street-accidents had befallen women and children, officers and estafettes of the Commune were forbidden by Cluseret to ride about Paris at a gallop: they might only trot. On another day we were apprized of quite an "Important Discovery at the Hôtel-de-Ville." Traces of blood, it seemed, had been found in the basements there, and experts declared this blood to be that of calves and pigs which had been slaughtered not more recently than the previous month of January. It followed (declared the officials of the Commune) that the National Defence folk had been gorging on pork and veal whilst all the rest of Paris was in a state of starvation. Forthwith an inquiry into certain acts of the National Defence was ordained, and entrusted to Citizen Casimir Bouis.

One of the remaining moderate journals of the period, *Le Bien Public*, amused itself one day by sending a telegram to the Commune and afterwards publishing it in print. It was to this effect: "Since rank of General is abolished and Cluseret threatens to punish unauthorized wearing of stripes, why did tall citizen with long white hair, white moustache and little beard, drive to-day to Café de Madrid in carriage, wearing cap with seven rows gold braid and three stars, besides Commander's cross of SS. Maurice and Lazarus? Urgent. Reply paid." It was true that Cluseret had suppressed the so-called aristocratic title of general, replacing it by that of chief; and also that he had endeavoured to restrain the lavish display of gold braid to which many officers were extremely addicted. Three stars on a *képi*

would have denoted the rank of Commander-in-Chief, and seven rows of gold braid an even higher grade, if such were possible. As for the "tall citizen with long white hair," I have no doubt that he existed, but am unable to identify him.

Arrests and perquisitions were still "the order of the day." Polo of the comic journal *L'Eclipse*,* one of Pilotell's *bêtes noires*, was set at liberty, however, and for fear of being rearrested speedily quitted Paris. On the other hand, Mme. Chaudey, whose husband was in prison and whom she never again saw alive, was deprived of all her ready cash by this same Pilotell, who on going to search her flat for compromising papers discovered there a sum of 815 francs and took it away with him. He was, at least, good enough to leave a receipt in which he stated that pending further instructions he had removed the money to the Prefecture of Police. Fortunately for Mme. Chaudey some friends came to her help.

On April 15 there was an attempted raid on the Belgian Legation in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, but the concierge contrived to get rid of the intruders. The Commune which had never ordered any such attempt was rather annoyed by it, and gave instructions for an inquiry. On the other hand, it despatched emissaries to the Invalides, where the old veterans of past wars, from the days of Napoleon onward, had remained with their Governor, General de Martimprey. Had he not given a written declaration to the effect that there were no concealed weapons in the whole establishment, it would have been searched from end to end and turned topsy-turvy. As it was, the citizen-visitors were loath to depart. They did not attempt to rifle the tomb of Napoleon, but

* See p. 139, *ante*.

they wished, it seems, to secure possession of his sword, hat, and other articles which had long been kept at the Invalides. Martimprey informed them, however, that all the mementoes of the great Captain had been removed from Paris prior to the siege, for fear lest the Germans should endeavour to appropriate them. In default of Napoleonic relics the Commune seized two more priests, the Curé of Notre Dame de Bonne Nouvelle and the Curé of Saint Jacques du Haut Pas. The latter's offence was a serious one, for had he not entreated the women among his congregation to dissuade their husbands from further participation in the civil war ?

I mentioned previously that on one occasion I made my way out of Paris by the gate near the Point-du-Jour in the hope of being able to cross the Seine by the bridge of Saint-Cloud. My desire at the time was, by some means or other, to reach Asnières, where I knew that some fighting had previously occurred. The reason was this : My father, never suspecting that we should have to stand a second real siege, had given "Poste Restante, Asnières," as an address to which a remittance from England might be sent. This occurred before postal arrangements were made at Saint-Denis, where I ultimately found a note stating that the remittance in question had been duly sent to Asnières in a registered letter, the amount being in English bank-notes. For a time we were still unable to get to Asnières. My attempt *viâ* Saint-Cloud had failed, and there was no possibility of making the journey by way of Neuilly. As, however, the money in question was no small amount, we at last decided to make a final effort to reach Asnières and if possible obtain the remittance there.

Thus, at an early hour on the morning of April 17, my father, my brother Arthur, and I managed to get out of Paris by one of the north-western gates, and after a very long and circuitous journey succeeded in crossing the Seine and reaching our destination. Asnières was then a much smaller place than it is nowadays, but it was already very well known for its boating and its public ball installed in a former château near the river-bank. Now and again as we approached the village we heard sounds of firing from Mont Valérien or more distant points, but Asnières itself was quiet and almost destitute of inhabitants, apart that is from a strong force of National Guards, many of whom sat drinking in the wine-shops and the cafés with their rifles between their legs.

Our expedition was undoubtedly a very venturesome one, and might prove unsuccessful, for the post-office might well be closed. We ascertained its whereabouts, however, and found it to be in the charge of a woman, who, although there had already been some hard fighting in the neighbourhood, had bravely remained at her post. Our visit surprised her, for all deliveries of letters at Asnières had ceased some time previously, the presence of the Communalists in the locality preventing postal communication with Versailles. On ascertaining our business, however, the worthy woman smiled and said: "Yes, I have a registered letter addressed to that name. It arrived here some time ago, before the fighting began, in fact, before the Parisians came down on us. As the letter was registered I took particular care of it, for I thought it might contain money, and did not want it to fall into the hands of the Guards. They came here and took a number of

letters which they opened and read, but I had hidden the registered ones, and still have them. Wait a minute, and I will fetch you yours."

She went upstairs, and returned presently with the letter addressed to my father, who, naturally enough, was very well pleased to secure it. Wishing to mark his sense of the *buraliste's* observance of duty, under circumstances from which many a man might well have shrunk, he asked her to let him make her a present. But she would have none of it, becoming, indeed, almost indignant at the idea of taking money for what she had done. "It was quite natural," said she; "I am in charge here, and I had to do my duty. But I shall be heartily glad when these sad times are over."

After thanking her and condoling with her in her difficult position, we went off, hoping to cross the Seine by the bridge at Courbevoie. But we had not gone far when several shots rang out, and on turning back we witnessed some remarkable incidents. A force of Versaillese troops, who had crossed the Seine at Bezons, was moving down on the Communalists at Asniéres and neighbouring localities. There was brisk firing in the vicinity of Courbevoie and Charlebourg, and shells presently began to fall on the Asniéres railway station. It must then have been about ten o'clock in the morning; and half an hour later an armed and armoured train came down the railway line from the direction of Colombes and opened fire—its mitrailleuses at last compelling the Communalists to decamp from the Asnières station. Shrapnel, coming I know not whence, also began to explode on the railway embankment, and afterwards a body of mounted gendarmes galloped up, charging the insurgents.

Having turned back, we witnessed a part of this engagement. Fighting was also going on near the château of Bécon, overlooking the Seine between Asnières and Courbevoie, and this position was eventually carried by some Versaillese infantry under General Davoust, a grandnephew, I believe, of the Napoleonic Duc d'Auerstadt. As the fighting came nearer and nearer, and the National Guards retreated in increasing numbers, we once more took to the river towpath and installed ourselves for the time in a dry ditch there. The ordinary bridge of Asnières had been partially blown up at the time of the German siege of Paris. The railway bridge also was dismantled. Trains could cross it, but it had no platform. Accordingly, the Communalists, when crossing or recrossing the Seine at this point, availed themselves of a pontoon-bridge, which spanned the river below the railway one. I find that five battalions of National Guards were at this time holding Asnières and neighbouring villages, and were under the orders of the Polish "General" Okolowitz, with whom—as assistant-commander, I believe—was another Pole named Landowski. Yaroslaw Dombrowski, their compatriot, had given them the appointments which they held.

I cannot be absolutely positive whether Okolowitz or Landowski was to blame for what occurred. But certain it is that when they and some of their men had safely effected a retreat across the Seine by means of the pontoon-bridge, it was suddenly severed, in such wise that when the remaining Guards, retreating from the Versaillese troops, began crowding down to the river-bank, they found themselves in jeopardy. Some vainly strove to repair the pontoon-bridge. Others scattered hither and thither;

and, finally, as the last efforts to withstand the regular troops ceased, a number of despairing insurgents took to the dismantled railway bridge and endeavoured to cross it. But it became necessary for them to jump from girder to girder, and, in the general haste and confusion, some of them fell into the Seine.

Amidst all this, the mounted gendarmerie of the Versaillese force likewise swept down to the river and the railway embankment. These gendarmes were armed with sabres and carbines. They put up the former, unslung the latter, and began, calmly and methodically, to pick off the men who were frantically striving to cross the railway bridge. More than one was wounded and fell into the rapid stream. Across it, at Levallois, the Communalists possessed some batteries, which had already been brought into action for the purpose of protecting the retreat. But the gunners were no marksmen, and shell after shell fell into the Seine, stirring the water into commotion and rendering the position of the Guards who had fallen into it yet more desperate than before. Quite a number of men were drowned before my eyes.

Our own position did not appear particularly safe. It seemed as if at any moment a shell might explode on the towpath near us, or even in the ditch where we were crouching. That did not happen, however, though the Seine hissed continually as projectile after projectile dived into its depths. It must have been about noon when the gendarmes at last retired from the river-bank and we were able to emerge from our place of retreat. The Communalist artillery fire still continued. The guns of the Paris ramparts also joined in the cannonade, and as we made our way cautiously along the towpath, a

number of other shells came whizzing through the air. For the most part they also fell into the river, though now and again one of them just struck the towpath and exploded there—fortunately at some distance from us.

I afterwards ascertained that the troops did not immediately occupy Asnières, but retired in the direction of their former positions, in such wise that Dombrowski ordered an attempt to be made to regain possession of the village. For this purpose some guns were brought down to the river-bank at Levallois, accompanied by a number of Paris omnibuses, which were employed as ammunition vans. On the morrow one of the Communalist newspapers, *Le Vengeur*, admitted that the day had gone against the insurgents, and complained bitterly that there were too many *cantinières* among them, and that they lost their heads by drinking too heavily.

On or about that 17th of April which I so well remember, the Commune secured another hostage in the person of a certain financier named Jean Baptiste Jecker, a naturalized Frenchman but a native of Porrentruy, in Switzerland, where he was born in 1810. On arriving in Paris, about 1836, Jecker became a clerk in Hottinguer's bank, but his elder brother, a medical man who had made a fortune in Mexico, invited him to that country, and he there launched into all sorts of speculations. Becoming intimate with Miguel Miramon, the Clericalist leader, who was momentarily elevated to the Presidency, Jecker—who had already secured large concessions in Lower California and Sonora, and mining rights at Tasco and Calorce—was further entrusted by him with the conversion of the Interior Debt. It was a

scandalous affair, and a very costly one for Mexico; but Miramon needed money, and Jecker was only too eager to make huge profits. Civil war supervened, however, and Miramon and his catspaw Zuloaga were supplanted by Juarez at the head of the Nationalist party.

Jecker, finding himself unable to obtain payment of his claims from the new officials of the Mexican treasury, came to France and laid his case before the third Napoleon's illegitimate half-brother, M. de Morny. On condition that he should receive thirty per cent. of the large sum which Jecker demanded, Morny undertook to interest the French Government in the affair. About the same time, however, Juarez, being in great financial straits, suspended the payment of interest on all foreign bonds for a period of two years; and, in October, 1861, this led to the joint intervention of France, Spain and Great Britain. Early in the following year the last-named Powers withdrew their squadrons and left France to deal with Mexico by herself. This was partly due to the circumstance that France, not content with supporting her bondholders, also demanded the immediate execution of Jecker's contract with Miramon's administration. Moreover, the United States being a prey to civil war, Napoleon III had conceived the idea of transforming the Mexican Republic into an Empire. As will be remembered, the Archduke Maximilian of Austria consented to occupy the Mexican throne.

At this juncture the Cabinet of the Tuileries still supported Jecker's claim, Jecker having become a French subject by virtue of letters of naturalization which Morny expressly procured for him; and it was finally decided by Maximilian's government that

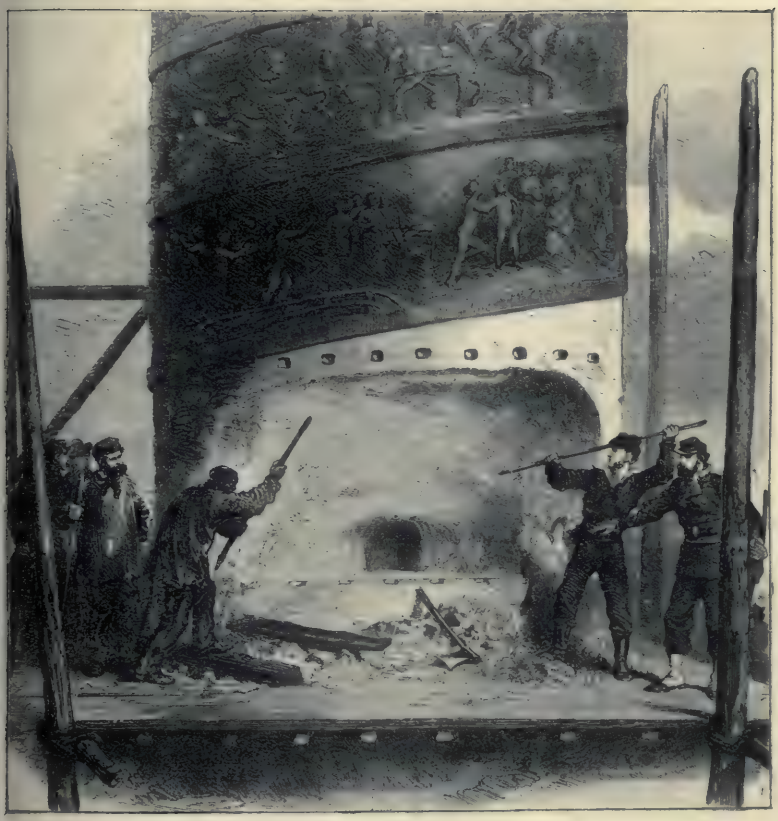
he should receive a sum of 22,660,000 francs (£906,400) in satisfaction of all demands. Three drafts were prepared, and the first two were paid in October and December, 1865; but when the third, which was for ten millions of francs, became due in the ensuing February, Maximilian refused to honour it, and revoked his financial minister for having assented to an arrangement which was so detrimental to the Mexican treasury. At the time when Maximilian took this course, Jecker's powerful ally, the Duc de Morny, was dead, and Napoleon III, having no longer to contend with his masterly half-brother, turned a deaf ear to the financier's appeals and threats. Among the papers found at the Tuileries at the fall of the Empire, were various letters addressed by Jecker to Napoleon's private secretary. They contained more than one passage declaring that if he did not obtain satisfaction he would be compelled to publish some very compromising documents.

Most of the money already paid to him had doubtless passed into Morny's hands, and he himself was in very reduced circumstances. At last, in June, 1867, the Emperor Maximilian was betrayed into the hands of Juarez's followers by Miguel Lopez, on whom he had repeatedly lavished favours, and after a brief military trial he, Miramon, and Mejia were shot at Queretaro. From that moment it became quite certain that Jecker would never obtain payment of any outstanding claims. Time passed, and the general public had forgotten him, when on finding himself in Paris under the rule of the Commune, and wishing to quit the city, he incautiously repaired in person to the ex-Prefecture of Police and applied for a passport. On hearing

his name, Raoul Rigault's officials pricked their ears. What! was this the notorious Jecker, who had helped to involve France in that lamentable Mexican business which had cost so many lives and so much treasure? It was not right that such an individual should remain at large, and so Jecker was summarily arrested and then removed to Mazas to keep company with Archbishop Darboy and other notable hostages.

There arose a kind of legend to the effect that Jecker was personally responsible for that unfortunate interference in Mexican politics which "Vice-Emperor" Rouher once described as "the greatest idea" of the third Napoleon's reign; but the brief account which I have just given suffices to show that Jecker's affair was only a subsidiary one compared with that of the bondholders of the Mexican Foreign Debt, and did not actually lead to the French enterprise which the United States brought to an end when the War of Secession ceased. At the same time, of all the Commune's hostages, Jecker was perhaps the least to be pitied, for he had shown himself unscrupulous in his attempts to appropriate other people's money. When one remembers, however, how lightly the dishonesty of financiers, even when they are of the Hooley or the Fenner type, is punished nowadays, one may in a measure pity Jecker, who ultimately paid for his misdoings with his life.

Besides making the expedition to Asnières, which I have already recounted, I was at this time (the last fortnight in April) frequently going out of Paris in other directions. Gustave Janet, the draughtsman, brother of Janet Lange the war-painter, had taken refuge at Nogent-sur-Marne, not caring, after



Sapping the Base of the Vendôme Column.

his experiences during the German siege, to face the excesses and hardships of the Commune. His wife, *née* Pauquet, one of the most beautiful women, as well as one of the best, that I have ever known,* was connected with the Duvelleroy family, the famous fan-makers of the Passage des Panoramas, whose masterpieces are nowadays eagerly sought by connoisseurs. The Duvelleroys had a house at Nogent, and there after an adventurous journey, when in spite of my Communalist passport it was only with difficulty that I escaped arrest at the hands of some over-zealous National Guards, I found the Janets installed with their son, my *camarade* Henri. The upshot of our conversation was that they betook themselves to London, where Janet "put on the wood" a good many of the sketches forwarded from Paris to the *Illustrated London News*. There are one or two examples of his work—notably the sapping of the base of the Vendôme column—among the illustrations which the proprietors of the *Illustrated London News* have kindly authorized me to reproduce in this present volume.

* Janet constantly portrayed her in his drawings. She became and remained his type of feminine beauty, and was always his model in his designs for his admirable publication *La Mode artistique*, which, for good taste, has never been approached by any fashions publication of more recent years. Carpeaux, the great French sculptor, virtually raved over Mme. Janet's arms and hands, the shapeliness of which was bound to strike anybody with artistic perceptions. I long treasured a sketch in oils representing this lady as Diana, but lost it unfortunately in a fire whilst I was living at Boulogne-sur-Seine. A portrait of myself by my friend Daniel Vierge (Urrabietta), the great black-and-white artist, was destroyed at the same time. It was one of his first attempts at oil-painting with his left hand, after he was stricken with paralysis in the right side. Good judges had declared this little picture to be a most life-like piece of work. I had merely sat to Vierge, however, in order to give him practice. His misfortune was due to overwork in order to provide for his mother and sisters.

I also remember making an excursion to Fontenay-aux-Roses in search of another artist who occasionally worked for our senior illustrated journal. This was Bocourt, who had a decided talent for portraiture, invariably managing to secure a "likeness." Once or twice a week, and occasionally more frequently, I also repaired to Saint-Denis for any letters which might have arrived there for my father or myself. The open space in front of the Saint-Denis railway station was usually crowded with vehicles, omnibuses, *tapissières*, *chars-à-bancs* and victorias, all waiting to convey people to Versailles, Saint-Germain, or Rueil. As time went on, however, there were often far more vehicles than "fares," on account of the difficulty which people experienced in getting out of Paris. Nevertheless, some young Communalists, who were provided with special permits, were constantly going in and out of the city, and undertook to execute virtually any kind of commission there. Some of them, unfortunately, were none too honest. Others sold the various Paris newspapers which supported the Commune, the rulers of the capital favouring this practice as a means of propaganda, though they did their best to prevent anybody from taking copies of the "moderate" journals out of the city for purposes of sale. The Versailles newspapers, which reflected the views of the government and the National Assembly, were in great request at Saint-Denis, and were bought up so eagerly that one often had difficulty in securing any of them. Now and again I paid half a franc and more for some fifteen-centimes journal in order to ascertain what the Versailles authorities and others thought of the insurrection.

Among the crowd which seemed to await the

arrival of every train from Paris, there were generally several German officers, and now and again I got into conversation with one or another of them. It appeared to me, however, that they came down to the Saint-Denis railway station the more particularly to ascertain whether such or such a train had brought any fair Parisiennes out of the capital. Saint-Denis, however, as I indicated once before, was already thronged with members of the *demi-monde*. Quite two-thirds of the "old guard" of the Café de Suède, the Café de Madrid and the Café Mazarin appeared to have gone over to the enemy. Judging by their high spirits, the officers of General von Fabrice's Army Corps were having "a right good time" in the ancient town associated with the burials of so many kings of France. Concerts were given in one and another café for the particular benefit of the German garrison; and although the chief theatre had been appropriated to postal purposes, there were various minor halls where dramatic and variety performances were occasionally given. Here follows an announcement of one such entertainment:—

IM GROSSEN SAALE
COURS BENOIST 17.
Donnerstag, 13 *April*, 1871.

1. Les Trois Sauvageon, vaudeville en un acte.
2. Lieder und komische Taenze.
3. Le Moulin du Diable, ballet-pantomime.

Anfang praecis 6 *Uhr. Ende* 8 *Uhr* ½.

Premières places: deux francs. Deuxièmes places: un franc.
Troisièmes places: cinquante centimes.

Paris, meanwhile, was becoming more and more dismal. Most workshops, apart from those used for military purposes, remained closed. The *magasins*

de nouveautés scarcely opened their doors. There were no spring fashions and no bargain days. At the slightest incident in the streets little crowds collected there. Arguments and speeches respecting some plan of campaign or some new form of Constitution were heard on all sides. Few, if any people, ventured to speak aloud on any frivolous subject. The cafés in the Quartier Latin and adjacent districts closed at ten o'clock, and those on the main boulevards before midnight. The wine-shops, however, seemed always to be open, and if the *mastroquets* were punctually paid they must have derived considerable profits from their National Guard customers. In spite, however, of the unrest, the turmoil, the apprehension, which grew greater every day, one still occasionally came upon a wedding-party. It is possible that the nuptial mass was celebrated even in a few churches at this period; but, for the most part, I believe, the marriages were exclusively civil ones, performed by the various district officials of the Commune. If I remember rightly, an act was subsequently passed by the National Assembly in order to legalize the unions contracted before the insurgent authorities. One day I saw a wedding-party passing along the Avenue d'Eylau while shells from the government's batteries were falling there. The bride seemed to be a little bit frightened by the racket, but it gave her a good excuse to hug the man of her choice, as well, of course, as something to remember in her later days. It must be difficult to forget that one is married when the knot has been tied in the midst of a relentless bombardment.

With only a couple of railway lines remaining to supply our needs, the prices of provisions rose throughout Paris, and I remember that, about the middle of

April, horse-flesh—virtually banished from our tables since the German siege—again appeared in some of the butchers' shops. At one corner of the Rue de la Paix and the Place Vendôme there was an English establishment where tea was sold, and one day, in order to make some purchases, I managed to get through the cordon of Guards stationed at this point. I was then able to survey the barricades defending the Place Vendôme and the many little tents which had been pitched there, and which gave the square the appearance of a veritable bivouac. Women, provided with coffee-cans or selling flowers, were going hither and thither among the National Guards, with whom they laughed and chatted. There was as yet no sign of the demolition of the Vendôme column. Yellow wreaths of immortelles, offered by the veterans of the Invalides at the last Fête Napoléon, still hung from the railings by which the column was encompassed. The latter's destruction, however, was merely delayed, and one morning the *Journal Officiel* issued an announcement inviting tenders for two lots of building materials and two lots of metal, forming part of the monument of *la grande armée.*

Arbitrary arrests still continued, and virtually no effect was produced by the order issued by Protot, the Commune's Delegate at Justice, to the effect that each fresh arrest should be notified to him with precise particulars of the charge preferred against each person who was cast into prison. The professors of the School of Medicine having thrown up their duties at this juncture, the Commune, indignant at the idea that instruction in the healing art should be suspended in the midst of hostilities, when every day scores if not hundreds of people were wounded,

announced its intention of reorganizing the school and engaging new professors, but I do not think that this was ever carried into effect.

On April 18 the Court Martial, which the Commune had recently instituted under the presidency of ex-Colonel Rossel, entered upon its duties, the first prisoner brought before it being a bookseller's *employé* named Jean Nicolas Girot, who, as commander of the 74th Battalion of the National Guard, had refused to lead his men against the Versaillese troops at Neuilly. Being convicted of disobedience to orders, the refractory Girot was condemned to death, but the sentence was never carried into effect. Henri Rochefort, who, after long siding with the Commune, was now becoming more and more independent, protested hotly against such a sentence being imposed in this case, and won a good many Communalists over to his way of thinking, though he was much less successful with his complaints about the suppression of all newspapers which did not zealously support the Commune's cause.

Another case on which the Court Martial under Rossel adjudicated at an early date was that of a *chef-de-bataillon* stationed at the fort of Ivry, who was charged, first, with failing to exercise proper control over his men, and, secondly, with abandoning his command. He answered that he had found it impossible to secure obedience. Whenever he gave an order that some drunken Guard should be placed under arrest, he was jeered at, and on one occasion actually thrust into a cell himself. Further, when he had padlocked all the places where provisions and wine were stored, the men broke down the doors and took whatever they fancied. Finally, they threatened to shoot him, and if he had quitted his command

it was because he had every reason to believe that they would carry their menace into effect.

Insubordination was indeed rife on all sides, and at the same time the Commune's military operations were often conducted in a most wasteful manner. Cluseret found it necessary to issue a protest against the indiscriminate firing of the southern forts, which consumed, to no purpose whatever, an extraordinary number of projectiles. The guns at Fort Vanves, said he, had actually fired no fewer than 16,000 shells! That was sheer waste, and he announced his intention of henceforth rationing the forts with respect to their ammunition. He at least provided them with plenty of men. All the *réfractaires* who were forcibly enrolled in the National Guard were despatched under strong escorts to the forts, and then marched to the front in order that they might learn a little courage—the more willing adherents of the Commune being placed behind them with orders to shoot any man who might be minded to turn tail. One day I came upon a party of two hundred despondent-looking *réfractaires* who were being conducted to the Fort de Bicêtre.

On April 19 the Commune issued yet another long proclamation extolling its own virtues and protesting against the infamous behaviour of Versailles. On the same day we were informed of the results of the recent complementary elections for the Commune. There had been very few voters in any part of Paris, and virtually none in the third and eighth arrondissements, that is, the Temple and the Elysée districts. The whole affair was such a farce that once again various men who were declared elected refused to occupy their seats. Among those who either took that course or else formally resigned was a clever

pamphleteer named Rogeard, who, in the last years of the Empire, had indicted that régime in a series of papers entitled *Les Propos de Labienus*. Although much less known, they were far superior to any of the effusions which Rochefort issued in *La Lanterne*. I knew Rogeard in his last years. He was a distinctly clever writer, excelling in pungency of satire and sarcasm. Another new member of the Commune, a man named Briosne, joined Rogeard in resigning, and at about the same time Félix Pyat also threatened to withdraw from the assembly at the Hôtel-de-Ville. The latter thereupon became somewhat alarmed, thinking that these examples might prove contagious. It therefore declared that nobody had a right to refuse an electoral mandate, and that it would accept no further resignations. Clémence and other members protested, however, against the course taken by the majority, and formally reserved their right to resign if it should please them to do so.

Pyat's quarrel with the Commune was the outcome of the latter's treatment of hostile newspapers. Arthur Arnould joined him in protesting against their suppression. The freedom of the press had always been a favourite doctrine with men like Arnould and Pyat, and although they well knew that such journals as *Le Bien Public* and *L'Opinion Nationale* were opposed to the Commune, they were unwilling to countenance their suppression. The majority at the Hôtel-de-Ville adhered, however, to their policy of preventing free speech; and not only were hostile newspapers suppressed, but when their managers endeavoured to remove their printing machinery from Paris, in order that they might resume publication elsewhere,

they were forbidden to do so under the most dire penalties.

The Commune did not always have its own way, however. When it seized 187,000 francs belonging to the Paris Gas Company, the latter's officials boldly declared that if the money were not immediately returned to them they would cease lighting the streets, whereupon the Commune reluctantly parted with its arbitrary levy. It contrived, however, to extort considerable sums from some of the railway companies. On the other hand, when it attempted to remove a quantity of *matériel de guerre* from the neutral zone intervening between its outposts and the German ones, General von Fabrice refused to allow it, and the insurgents sullenly respected his prohibition.

On Sunday, April 23, the *Journal Officiel* informed us that the Commune had received an address of sympathy from "the English Republicans," to whom it addressed its thanks. On the same day some of the Paris Freemasons again bestirred themselves, and demonstrated in the streets against the continuance of civil war. On the other hand, the Central Committee of the National Guard, which most people erroneously regarded as defunct, again gave signs of life, and there were indications that it felt very discontented with the Commune's military policy, and that it meant to prosecute hostilities more vigorously than ever. Further, there was now a growing disposition to resent Raoul Rigault's virtual dictatorship at the Prefecture of Police. Protot, as I previously pointed out, had demanded prompt information respecting all arrests. Rigault did not supply it; and, moreover, he refused to allow his fellow-members of the Commune to visit

the prisons and question (if necessary) the people whom they found confined there. At the Commune's sitting on April 23 Jules Vallès brought up the whole question, and it was finally decided that all the members of the assembly should be privileged to visit the prisons whenever they pleased. At the same time Pilotell, the obnoxious Commissary of Police to whom I have frequently referred, was dismissed from his office.

On the following day Raoul Rigault attended the meeting of the Commune and protested against the vote respecting the inspection of the prisons. He was particularly anxious that nobody should be allowed to interview the prisoners who were being kept in so-called "secret confinement"—*au secret*, as the French say—and he threatened to resign his office if his views were not accepted. This led to quite a battle royal. Arthur Arnould attacked Rigault vigorously. Jourde protested that there ought to be no secret confinement at all. Delescluze endeavoured to expostulate with the contestants. Arnaud declared himself against all despotic measures, and finally Billioray suggested that the right of visiting the prisons should be confined to a special committee of inquiry. Rigault adopted that view, and asked for a vote of confirmation. But this the Commune refused to give him, simply passing to "the order of the day." Only forty-one members of the assembly were present at this moment, and Rigault was defeated by merely a majority of seven votes. Nevertheless he at once resigned his office as Delegate at the Prefecture, and Ferré, who belonged to the Police Committee and usually supported him, likewise threw up his functions. A little later thirty-one members of the Commune, out of

Impressments in the Streets of Paris.

fifty-five present, chose Cournet as Rigault's successor.

That same day, April 24, the Paris newspapers contained a strange announcement. One of the Commune's staff-officers, a man named Tribalet, had discovered a number of skeletons in a kind of crypt under the church of Saint-Laurent on the Boulevard Magenta. Several of these skeletons were those of women; and, according to citizen Tribalet, some ten years previously a workman who was executing some repairs in the church had heard groans coming from underground. A whole picture of lust and villainy on the part of the clergy of Saint-Laurent was thereupon offered to the public imagination. Unfortunate women had been decoyed to that subterranean vault, subjected to indignities, and then inhumanly murdered! This idea appealed strongly to the anti-clerical mind, but the truth was very different. The church of Saint-Laurent was a comparatively modern one, which had taken the place of a much older fabric surrounded by a graveyard, whence had come the skeletons to which Citizen Tribalet so eagerly directed public attention in the hope of thereby increasing the animosity against the unfortunate Paris clergy—so many of whom had already been cast into prison. Among the most recent arrests at that moment were those of two Missionary Fathers, who had lately returned to France from China.

On April 24, quite fifteen hundred Parisian Freemasons demonstrated on the Place de l'Hôtel-de-Ville in favour of compromise and peace, but the Commune turned a deaf ear to that suggestion. The intervention of the Freemasons between Paris and Versailles, had, however, at least one good result.

It was arranged that hostilities should be suspended from 9 A.M. until 5 P.M. on Tuesday the 25th. Considerations of humanity rendered this imperative, particularly at Neuilly and Les Ternes, where many destitute people were still shut in between the hostile forces. I believe that at this period the troops might have effected an entry into Paris, for the Porte Maillot and its defences were virtually ruins. Until the very eve of the brief truce the bombardment of the city continued. There was also some street fighting at Neuilly on the 24th, when several men were killed on both sides; and on the morrow the quietude which suddenly prevailed appeared to be the greater as it was so very unusual. One missed that constant booming of guns which on other days made itself heard so frequently and ominously above every other sound of the city's feverish life.

Now neither the thunder of artillery nor the crepitation of musketry was to be heard, whilst people hastily flocked to the Champs Élysées, the Avenue de la Grande Armée and the Avenue des Ternes, all eager to witness the removal of the remaining unfortunate denizens of Neuilly and Les Ternes, and, if possible, to obtain a glimpse of the destruction said to have been wrought beyond the ramparts by the cannonading of recent weeks. On crossing the Place de l'Étoile I observed that here and there the Arc de Triomphe was slightly damaged; and as I went down the Avenue de la Grande Armée the traces of the bombardment became more and more numerous. Several houses, particularly some near the Rue Rude, were ruins. Great branches of trees, carried away by passing projectiles, lay upon the ground. Every now and then, too, a broken

street-lamp was stretched across the footway. Beyond the Porte-Maillot, the so-called Château de l'Étoile, a former *brasserie*, was smouldering. Of recent years it had been used by an English importing firm as a store-place for Bass's ale, Guinness's stout, Crosse and Blackwell's pickles, and so forth. Along the Boulevard d'Inkermann and the Avenue des Ternes one was again confronted by abundant destruction. Rescued people were being placed—often with some of their goods and chattels—in vehicles of various kinds, which, heavily laden, went slowly into Paris ; and at intervals you saw, in some corner or other, a dead body over which flies were constantly hovering and buzzing.

There were affecting sights at some of the conventual asylums. Unhappy, dazed-looking septuagenarian sisters were being removed from the Retraite Sainte-Anne, which was damaged by projectiles. Sick children were being taken from the Institution de la Sainte-Croix. Paralyzed old men were being carried out of Notre Dame des Sept Douleurs. Crippled girls were likewise being placed in conveyances outside the Maison des Jeunes Infirmes. Some of them were no more than six years old, and yet had perforce remained at Neuilly throughout the terrible bombardment. The Government and the Commune, thinking of nothing but their mutual hatred, were conjointly responsible for the sufferings of those little ones. A truce ought to have been arranged long previously, in order that all the sick and the infirm might have been removed to places of safety. Now they and the other remaining denizens of these western suburbs were at last being taken into Paris. The crowds of people assembled in the Champs Élysées saw the woeful procession

pass them on its way to the Palais de l'Industrie,* where temporary shelter was afforded. And at night the cannonade burst forth yet once again. Forts Issy, Montrouge, and Vanves were bombarded by the Government artillery; whilst, on the Communalist side, the batteries at Auteuil and the Point-du-Jour fired vigorously in the direction of Brimborion and Sèvres.

It transpired about this time that the National Guards on active service outside the ramparts were receiving, as their average daily rations, 200 grammes of meat, 760 grammes of bread, with a third of a litre of wine and small quantities of coffee and sugar. These allowances and all the other costs of the fighting implied expenditure, and the Commune, still and ever in sore straits for money, was constantly applying to the Bank of France and other financial institutions for additional "advances." On April 27 it finally decided to levy £80,000 on the various railway-companies, claiming from them the 10 per cent. on the traffic receipts which should have gone to the regular Government. As I previously showed, many of the railway-lines had now ceased working; but the companies were required to pay up from the date when their services had been revived after the German siege. The largest levy was on the Lyons line, which had to contribute nearly £28,000, and the lowest on the Western line, which escaped with the payment of about half that amount. It was decreed that this money should be payable in forty-eight hours, and that all future traffic accounts should be made up every ten days

* It was demolished some years ago. Originally erected for the International Exhibition of 1855, it afterwards served for the annual Salons, cattle and poultry shows, etc.

when 10 per cent. of the receipts were to be handed over. The Commune or its acolytes also derived a number of small amounts from the confiscation of sundry Church property and the fines which here and there were levied on parish priests.

Before dealing with the treatment which the Commune meted out to many of the Paris churches, I must mention that in the latter part of April Félix Pyat's journal *Le Vengeur* published a curiously suggestive article from the pen of one of its principal contributors, Henri Bellenger. "L'Incendie et la Révolution" was the significant title of this effusion, in which Bellenger pointed out that in former times many an ancient and tumble-down city had been destroyed by fire to the temporary misfortune and inconvenience of its inhabitants, but greatly to the advantage of those who had come afterwards; for when the ruins of innumerable old and squalid hovels had been cleared away, and the soil purified by fire, a new and far healthier city had been erected on the spot. Revolution, he remarked, swept by like a conflagration in great coils of dark smoke, streaked with bright tongues of flame. If it were a disaster, it was also, urged Bellenger, a Pentecost, and he added: "When the present rotten social system with its noxious institutions has been swept away in a great blaze, we will rear on the purified soil of Paris, a new and model city, akin to the Jerusalem of the Apostle." Other nations, he concluded, would then follow the example of Paris.

One of the ancient institutions which the majority of the Communalists were undoubtedly anxious to obliterate was the Roman Catholic Church. I have already spoken of the arrest of the Archbishop of Paris and many of the priests, and of some of

the outrages to which the churches were subjected. Let us now take a brief survey of what happened in the latter respect in one and another direction. Both the priests and the churches had been threatened repeatedly, even during the latter part of the German siege. The Club de la Solidarité, held at Batignolles, then adopted a resolution proposed by a certain Citizen Flers to the effect that there could be no real human progress until not a priest remained alive or a church standing in the whole of France. The Club de la Cour d'Aligre, in the Rue Saint-Honoré, capped this by voting that society could only be purified by the burning of each and every church, after all the priests had been shut up inside them. As for the Club de la Vengeance, it protested against the employment of the clergy in the ambulances for fear lest they should administer poison to wounded patriots!

Curiously enough, however, when the Commune came into being there were certain parishes where the clergy remained virtually unmolested, and where no damage whatever was done to the churches, either by deliberate pillage and depredation, or by the street-fighting between the regular troops and the insurgents. Among the edifices which escaped all harm were the church of the Annunciation at Passy, Notre Dame d'Auteuil, and Saint-Pierre de Chaillot, all on the western side of the city; also the Sainte-Chapelle adjoining the Palais de Justice; Saint-Louis-en-l'Ile, near Notre Dame; Saint-Germain-des-Prés (the oldest of the Paris churches) with Sainte-Clotilde, Saint-François Xavier, and Saint-Pierre du Gros Caillou—all in the Faubourg Saint-Germain; Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet in the Quartier Latin; Notre Dame des Champs near

the Boulevard Montparnasse; Saint-Louis d'Antin, near the main Boulevards; and Notre Dame des Blancs-Manteaux in the eastern district of the Marais. In every other instance, however, the churches were more or less interfered with or damaged in one or another fashion. On or about April 20, twenty-six had been closed by order of the Commune, which had also shut up numerous chapels belonging to the religious orders.

I spoke previously of what happened at the cathedral of Notre Dame during April, and will now only add that on May 4 all its treasures were removed to the Garde Meuble on the Quai d'Orsay, and that after the entry of the troops into Paris a determined attempt was made to destroy the famous edifice by fire, a large number of chairs and benches being gathered together, saturated with petroleum, and then set alight. An irretrievable disaster was averted, however, by the devotion of the house-surgeons and medical assistants at the Hôtel-Dieu, who succeeded in extinguishing the flames, though not until a quantity of old and beautifully carved woodwork had been badly charred, and much of the mosaic pavement given to the cathedral by Louis XIII, absolutely destroyed. Fortunately the sacred relics and vessels, previously removed to the Garde Meuble (otherwise the State storehouse) were only partially damaged. The repair of these articles and of the cathedral itself subsequently cost some £12,000.

Let us turn now to some of the more central churches of the city. Saint-Gervais, just behind the Hôtel-de-Ville, was saved by Clémence of the Commune* in conjunction with a certain Captain Roussel

* See p. 95, *ante*.

of the National Guard. A few valuables were removed from this church, but it was neither closed nor turned like so many others into a public club. Going eastward, one found Saint-Paul-and-Saint-Louis, the old church of the Palais des Tournelles and the Hôtel Saint-Paul, still open, and funeral ceremonies often taking place there, particularly when the family of some deceased officer of the National Guard desired that religious rites should be celebrated over his remains before they were interred. There were actually occasions when hundreds of Guards crowded this church in order to witness some funeral mass, and when their bands attended and played the most solemn religious music! Ultimately, however, a club installed itself in the building, and in the course of its proceedings passed sentence of death on such enemies of the Commune as Thiers, Trochu, and MacMahon. After the troops entered the city Saint-Paul-and-Saint-Louis suffered severely. The Communalist batteries at Père-Lachaise and the Buttes-Chaumont selected its dome as their objective, and £2000 or so were afterwards spent in repairing it.

Turning westward, the two ancient churches of Saint-Merri and Saint-Nicolas des Champs, both in the Rue Saint-Martin, incurred no great damage until the last days of the insurrection. Saint-Merri became for a while an ambulance, and when the Communalists resolved to burn it down, they shrank from doing so in consequence of the bravery of a number of women of the district, who crowded into it with their children! Their pious courage saved the old Gothic fane. On the other hand, Saint-Nicolas was turned into a public club during the latter days of April, and was then generally crowded with

people. The Curé had previously been arrested, but was released on paying a fine of £100, *plus* £8 which were charged for the meals served to him during his imprisonment. The depredations in this church were few and relatively unimportant, but the promoters of the club deemed it appropriate to set up various anti-clerical emblems and to decorate the crucified figure of Christ with a red sash! The chief damage done to Saint-Nicolas occurred during the street-fighting.

I referred previously to Abbé Simon, the Curé of Saint-Eustache near the Halles. Although he was released from prison * he could not prevent his church from being turned into a club early in May. It was, however, perhaps the best conducted of all the church clubs. No smoking was allowed. Several members of the Commune attended, and among the numerous "lady-orators" were the notorious Louise Michel, of whom I shall speak hereafter, a *cantinière* named Brossut, who subsequently fought against the troops at the Montparnasse railway-station, and a certain Marie Menans, who had a share in the conflagrations of the Rue Royale and the Tuileries. Outwardly, Saint-Eustache was rather badly damaged during the fighting in the district.

Notre Dame des Victoires, long the favourite church of the Empress Eugénie, was invaded on May 17 (the eve of Ascension Day) by the Commune's commissary Le Moussu.† A quantity of valuable objects were then carried away, and never afterwards recovered, among them being several crowns for the famous statue of the Virgin. Two of them

* See pp. 168, 177, *ante*.
† See p. 138, *ante*.

had been given by Pope Pius IX, and two others, it appears, by one of the Marchionesses Wellesley. Further, a large silver lamp, presented by the Empress Eugénie after the victory of Solferino, was abstracted, like several other *ex-voto*. The losses represented a sum of quite £12,000. When the National Guards stationed in the church were replaced there by some so-called "Vengeurs de Flourens," all sorts of excesses ensued. Loose women were brought into the church, and participated in a Moulin-Rouge kind of *fête de nuit*, when one or another Vengeur masqueraded hilariously in the vestments of the clergy. The vaults, moreover, were explored, old tombs in the crypt were opened, and skulls and bones were set up in little piles outside the church entrance. Some of the edifice's belongings were afterwards found at the Garde-Meuble and the district town-hall, and the greatly-prized statue of Our Lady of Victory escaped destruction owing to the strategy of a certain M. Libmann, who, pretending to be an American collector, offered to purchase it. The entry of the regular troops into Paris interrupted the negotiations at a critical moment. At the last stage several of the clergy and their parishioners barricaded themselves in Notre Dame des Victoires and thereby saved it from being set on fire.

Legend if not history asserts that the signal for the massacre of Saint Bartholomew was given from the tower of Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois, hard by the Louvre. That tower, held by the Communalists during the Week of Bloodshed, was then badly damaged by artillery and rifle fire. The subsequent repairs to tower and church cost some £8000. At an earlier stage, Saint-Germain became a club much

frequented by women, conspicuous among whom was a handsome creature of Polish birth, named Lodoïska Kaweska. About thirty years of age, she was the mistress of an officer of the Commune's "Turcos," and arrayed herself in uniform, wearing also long boots decorated with gold tassels, and having a brace of revolvers in her belt, and a red cockade in her blue cap. When the end came Lodoïska was sent to prison for five years. She and her friends of the so-called Club des Libres-Penseurs smoked cigarettes during their discussions, but the President, a certain Pierre, preferred a clay pipe.

The famous church of Saint-Roch, the scene of one of Napoleon's early exploits, has been previously mentioned by me.* Its parishioners stoutly resisted the attempts to turn it into a club, but were overcome by the Communalists. Religious rites, however, were occasionally celebrated there, although they were more than once disturbed by the insurgents, as on one occasion when a band of inebriate Guards rushed into the church whilst some forty young girls were taking their first Communion. The chapel of the Tuileries, no great distance from Saint Roch, was ransacked for valuables, and a number of sacred vessels of gold and silver, studded with gems, were sent to the Mint to be melted down there. Jourde, the Commune's Financial Delegate, opposed their destruction, however. Nevertheless, the chapel's losses represented a sum of quite £1000, half of which was the value assigned to a certain pastoral ring which mysteriously disappeared. Not far from Saint-Roch and the Tuileries, the Church of the Assumption was robbed of chalices, monstrances, and plate valued at about £500. Seven men implicated

* See p. 186, *ante*.

in this theft were afterwards arrested and sent to prison.

In the neighbouring Rue du Mont Thabor, stood, I think, the parsonage of the Madeleine church, whose Curé, Abbé Deguerry, became one of the Commune's chief hostages. This parsonage, as I previously related, was ransacked; and Deguerry, who momentarily found an asylum elsewhere, was apprehended in the small hours of the morning whilst he was endeavouring to get away in a long overcoat and a slouched hat, lent to him by some friends. I do not find that his church, the Madeleine, was pillaged. At all events, it remained open, the *vicaire* in charge of it, Abbé Lamazou, conducting several funeral services at the instigation of widows who had lost their husbands in the fighting outside Paris. However, a day or two before the troops entered the city, Lamazou was arrested and sent to La Roquette, where he fortunately escaped the fate which overtook so many other hostages. During the Week of Bloodshed the columns and the sculptured *fronton* of the Madeleine were damaged by artillery and rifle fire. When the troops at last entered the church they found there the corpses of three insurgents who had probably sought a refuge in the building after being wounded.

At Passy, on the western side of Paris, there was some little robbery at the church of Saint-Honoré. That of Saint-Ferdinand at Les Ternes escaped both pillage and desecration, but it was badly knocked about by the fire of the rival combatants. Saint-Philippe du Roule in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré was subjected to various searches in the latter days of May, but was not otherwise interfered with. Abbé Miquel, one of its *vicaires*,

who had previously been arrested, contrived, according to one account, to escape with the connivance of friends, and after assuming a disguise made his way to Saint-Denis. The Chapelle Expiatoire, erected in Restoration days to the memory of Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette and the unhappy little "Child of the Temple"—who even if he did not die there, was certainly no Naundorff—escaped the fate which the Commune decreed for it. It was to have been demolished, and Citizen Fontaine (already entrusted with the destruction of Thiers's house) was to have carried the Commune's decision into effect. But this was prevented by that same M. Libmann whose intervention saved the statue of the Virgin at Notre Dame des Victoires. He offered to buy the chapel for £4600—and indeed he at once paid £200 for the vessels, etc., employed at the celebration of mass there. But, on the other hand, he insisted that the edifice should be demolished in a systematic manner, each stone being duly numbered, in order that he might have everything re-erected somewhere in America. This is no fairy tale, but the positive truth. Fontaine fell in with the idea, but protracted negotiations ensued with the Commune, and, the latter's downfall supervening, the chapel was saved. M. Libmann was, of course, no American, but a Frenchman of very strong religious views. After the Commune he received a letter of thanks from the Comte de Chambord, writing as head of the house of Bourbon, the decoration of the Legion of Honour from the French Government, and that of Saint Gregory from Pope Pius.

Not far from the Chapelle Expiatoire is the church of Saint-Augustin, where the only trouble occurred during the Commune's last days, when

the red flag was hoisted over one of its doors and some of the clergy were arrested—to be promptly released, however, by the orders of Lavalette, who, once before, had preserved Notre Dame from spoliation.* East of Saint-Augustin is La Trinité, where for a few days in May was set up the so-called Club de la Délivrance, frequented by a number of women who smoked there freely, whilst discussing the proper means to regenerate society. Every valuable was taken away from the church, no fewer than five removal-vans being employed for the purpose. I believe, however, that a large part of the "booty" was afterwards found at the Garde Meuble. On the Tuesday of the Week of Bloodshed a shell found its way into the church by a window, and exploded in one of the transepts, when it badly damaged the organ. The repairs at La Trinité cost about £1500.

I come now to Notre Dame de Lorette, whence early in April Commissary Le Moussu (nicknamed Bismarck because he greatly resembled that statesman) removed all valuables, taking them to the local town-hall, where they were afterwards found. At no great distance, in the Rue Lafayette, the little church of Saint-Joseph—patronized, curiously enough, by the Austrian Emperor—suffered during the fighting the loss of a large stained-glass window, given to it by that monarch in 1867, and valued at over £1000. On the other hand, in the middle of May, the insurgents deliberately devastated the church of Notre Dame de Bonne Nouvelle near the Boulevard of that name, smashing its altars, lacerating its paintings, and destroying its pulpit. The neighbouring church of

* See pp. 26, 57, 176, *ante*.

Saint-Eugène in the Faubourg Poissonnière, escaped with little damage.

In the Marais district Saint-Jean-and-Saint-François (Rue Charlot) was pillaged, and so was its parsonage. Saint-Martin in the Rue des Marais was saved by its Curé paying a fine of a little more than £100. Saint-Joseph in the Rue du Corbeau also escaped injury, and Saint-Denis du Saint-Sacrement in the Rue de Turenne was effectually protected by the local mayor (Bonvalet, the *restaurateur*) and his daughter. Sainte-Élizabeth du Temple, founded by Marie de' Medici, became the meeting-place of a club, whose members voted on May 15 a resolution to the effect that the Archbishop of Paris ought to be put to death. The building was somewhat damaged by artillery fire some ten days later.

The church of Sainte-Marguerite in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine also became a club, presided over by the odious Philippe who set fire to the church of Bercy.* The first time this rascal took the chair at the so-called Club des Prolétaires he said that he had just come from Saint-Éloi at Reuilly and had told the priest there that if he wished to celebrate any rites he would have to pay £800 for the use of the nave and choir and £160 for one of the aisles. On Thursday, May 25, the Communalists collected at Sainte-Marguerite all necessary combustibles for setting the church on fire; but they had to contend with the troops, and the more pressing need of defending themselves constrained them to relinquish their incendiary design. The church of Saint-Leu likewise became a club after its Curé had been sent to Mazas. Two coffins were found in the crypt,

* See pp. 113, 117, *ante*.

one of them containing the body of an elderly woman, the wife of a local tradesman who had been unable to have the remains removed to a cemetery. The Communalists had the audacity to make a public exhibition of this coffin, mendaciously labelling it: *Jeune fille violée et enterrée vivante par les prêtres!* During the Commune's last days Saint-Leu was shelled by the insurgents from the Buttes-Chaumont, the damage then done to it representing some £3000. Saint-Ambroise on the neighbouring Boulevard Voltaire was closed for religious purposes on April 22, and then became the Club des Prolétaires. The damage done to the building during the last days of the fighting involved repairs which cost £4000. Its Curé, Abbé Delmas, had been consigned to the prison of La Roquette, but escaped assassination.

Let us now go northward. I previously referred to the skeletons found at Saint-Laurent on the Boulevard Magenta. The valuables contained in the sacristy of this church were packed up for removal, but left in the building, where they were found after the Bloody Week. On the other hand, there was no attempt to pillage Saint-Vincent-de-Paul in the upper part of the Rue de Lafayette, but it was badly damaged by artillery fire. Saint-Germain at Charonne escaped injury, though some of its clergy were arrested, whilst the adjacent chapel of the Sœurs de la Providence was pillaged. Saint-Jean-Baptiste at Belleville remained inwardly intact, but suffered outwardly from exploding projectiles. Saint-Christophe at La Villette, where a Polish priest remained in charge, was turned into the Club des Républicains révolutionnaires, much frequented by women, who whilst following the debates often gave the breast to their squealing infants.

A charge of a sou was made for admission to this club, and a plate was often passed round for the benefit of the orphans of the Civil War. The pictures of the Chemin de la Croix had here been slashed and bayoneted, and the church was otherwise defaced. During the last fighting the troops virtually carried it by assault, and the nave was strewn with the corpses of National Guards who had resisted to the death.

Notre Dame de la Croix at Ménilmontant became a "no fee" club at which Paule Minck, a then notable champion of women's rights, often perorated. The last sitting was held on May 6, when the assembled "clubbists" voted for the execution of the Archbishop and all other hostages. That said, the Commune turned the church into a provision and ammunition store in readiness for the ultimate struggle on the north-eastern heights. A so-called Club de la Révolution met at Saint-Bernard at La Chapelle, where no great damage was done. Notre Dame de Clignancourt, however, lost appurtenances valued at £600. Of Saint-Pierre at Montmartre I have previously spoken. The Commune turned this church, first into a tailoring workshop for its partisans —some fifty women and girls then being employed there—secondly, into a store-place for ammunition, and finally into a *corps-de-garde*. At Sainte-Marie des Batignolles there were a few relatively unimportant perquisitions. Saint-Michel in the same district served as a club, the most prominent frequenters of which were Chalain of the Commune and a virago named Lefêvre, who always wore a broad red scarf and carried a revolver. She was usually called La Blanchisseuse, being, indeed, a washerwoman of the Lavoir Sainte-Marie; and with

her tall, scraggy figure and her dark hair and complexion, she somewhat suggested "La Grande Virginie" of "L'Assommoir"—that is, as Virginie may have become in her later days.

Let us now cross the Seine to Reuilly, La Gare, the Quartier Latin, and the aristocratic Faubourg Saint-Germain. Abbé Lesmayoux, the priest in charge of Notre Dame de la Gare, was twice saved from impending death at the hands of the insurgents—on the first occasion by a friendly clock-maker named Floury, and on the second by a certain Captain Desfosse of the National Guard. This church appears to have been more or less protected by the local mayor, an ex-journalist named Passedouet. On the other hand, Saint-Éloi at Reuilly was pillaged of its monstrances and chalices, and when the Curé protested, saying that he would no longer be able to celebrate mass, he was answered: "Use a glass, that is surely good enough for such a deity as yours." The chief of the pillagers was an individual who called himself Labruyère de Médecis, claiming, indeed, to be descended from the famous Florentine house. His calling, however, had been that of a concierge, and when he was arrested subsequent to the Commune he was found in a doorway selling "chips," fried on a portable stove, to the housewives of the neighbourhood. A certain ex-Abbé Perrin, who had become a Jacobin and never ceased railing at the Church, figured prominently at a club which installed itself at Saint-Éloi, and which was patronized by quite a number of women, notably a certain Catherine Rogissart, who at last formed a small battalion of amazons, and a violent and crazy creature called Thérèse, who had fought, it was said, at the barricades in June, 1848. Petroleum and gunpowder

were eventually got together for the purpose of destroying Saint-Éloi, but the church was luckily saved by the arrival of the regular troops.

Saint-Marcel, in the district of that name, was occupied by National Guards who after eating, drinking, and sleeping there, eventually left the church in an extremely filthy condition. Saint Médard was not only pillaged but dilapidated—organ, ornaments, paintings, and altars being smashed and overthrown, and the damage exceeding in value a couple of thousand pounds. Saint-Pierre at Montrouge was, for a time, divided by partitions into two sections, one being left to the clergy, and the other assigned to a club, over which presided a hairdresser named Dardenne, in later years a somewhat prominent Anarchist. There arose, however, so many disputes between the clubmen, on one side, and the priests and their flock on the other, that the latter eventually removed to a house in the Rue d'Alésia, where the ritual was regularly celebrated.

Notre Dame de Plaisance, situated near the Chaussée du Maine, and the smallest, humblest of all the Paris churches, was vainly searched for treasure, and on two unburied bodies being found there the usual tales of vice and crime on the part of the clergy were circulated and the Curé was consigned to prison. He was afterwards offered his liberty in return for £120, which, however, he refused to pay; and ultimately one of Protot's officials, a good-natured commissary named Coppens, took pity on him and set him free. Meantime, a club which assembled at his church was discussing the best means of defending Paris from the Versailles soldiery. The employment of Orsini bombs being

suggested, and a citizen called Roussel offering to manufacture them in large quantities, a deputation from the club waited on the Commune with this proposal. However, nothing came of it.

Saint-Lambert at Vaugirard was the seat of the Club des Femmes patriotes, whose president, an Austrian woman named Reidenrath, wore a kind of zouave costume with red ribbons floating from her braided hair. She was very violently inclined, invariably carried a revolver, and endeavoured to form a corps of women who were to have been known as the Carabinières de la Mort. Saint-Thomas d'Aquin, near the Rue du Bac, was more than once ransacked for valuables, but otherwise it received no injury. The well-known church of Saint-Sulpice escaped both dilapidation and robbery, but witnessed some very strange sights indeed when the Communalists decided to hold a club under its roof. They were opposed by the regular worshippers, and directly one side began to sing the "Carmagnole" or the "Chant des Girondins," the other retorted by chanting the "Magnificat" or the "Salve Regina." Eventually the Communalists triumphed, and installed their so-called Club de la Victoire in the church. Curiously enough, an Englishman, said to be named Charles Robins and to be a graduate of Oxford, was elected honorary president of this assembly, which was frequented by Lodoïska the Polish beauty, Louise Michel the "Red Virgin," and a woman who was the mistress of Dr. Tony Moilin,* the usurping local mayor.

Just before Moilin was shot at the Luxembourg, one of the priests of Saint-Sulpice married him to his mistress, who was at this time expecting the

* See p. 66, *ante*.

birth of a child. In Moilin's case the death-penalty was, I consider, excessive. As a medical man he was very clever, and had been decorated with a special medal for the zeal he had displayed during one of the epidemics of cholera in Paris. A book which he wrote on "Paris in the Year 2000" was a somewhat amusing socialist trifle. He prophesied in it that in the year in question all the streets of Paris would be roofed with glass, that personal property would be abolished, and that everybody would be allowed a yearly income of £500. I feel convinced that none of those predictions will ever come true.

Sainte-Geneviève, otherwise the Pantheon, was closed by the Commune on March 30 when the cross was struck off the chief entrance and replaced by a red flag, the latter emblem also being hoisted on the dome. Apart from the effects of the street-fighting, Soufflot's famous pile escaped further damage. The neighbouring ancient fane of Saint-Étienne du Mont, where Archbishop Darboy's predecessor, Mgr. Sibour, was assassinated in January, 1857, secured at first the protection of Citizen Regère of the Commune, who, as I previously related, sent his little son there to be prepared for his first Communion. The tombstone of Sainte-Geneviève, the patron saint and protectress of Paris, and the precious coffer containing relics of her, had previously been concealed in a safe place; which was a wise precaution, for eventually a band of ruffians commanded by a man named Claude, a master-builder who had formerly conspired against Napoleon III, swept down upon the church, scoured every nook, and carried off a number of paintings, vestments, and other valuable things. During the

last fighting, moreover, Saint-Étienne was damaged by a shell.

Saint-Severin, a thirteenth and fourteenth century Gothic church, near the lower end of the Rue Saint-Jacques, became a club early in the month of May, and was frequented by many of the girls who claimed to have succeeded the long-vanished *grisettes* of the Quartier Latin. The first president here was an eating-house keeper named Martin, who wished to confiscate all private property and destroy all palaces. He was superseded by a friend of Raoul Rigault's, named Trohel, who during the insurrection of October, 1870, had carried Félix Pyat on his back into the Hôtel-de-Ville. Trohel was as violent as Martin, but the women infinitely preferred to discuss such questions as marriage and free-love. Five years was the longest limit ever suggested for the matrimonial tie. The majority favoured merely three months.

Near the other end of the Rue Saint-Jacques is the church of that name. This also became a club much frequented by women. They helped the men to drink up a fairly large store of sacramental wine, and there were other orgies also. Virtually everything of any value was stolen, and the old tombs in the crypt were broken open, the bones of Cassini the astronomer, who first established the Paris Observatory, being, for some inscrutable reason, carried away. Among the female frequenters of the club was a woman who subsequently—that is, during the Bloody Week—went about, sword in hand, in a state of hysterical fury, which she strove to assuage by decapitating any corpses that she saw lying in the streets, and this although they were for the most part those of National Guards. At the

club this creature raved frantically, her face wearing the while much the same expression as that which may be observed on the countenances of militant suffragettes when they are hurling choice imprecations at police-magistrates and others. She was doubtless of much the same breed—the breed of the *possédées de Loudun* and the *convulsionnaires de Saint-Médard*. Among her club-companions was a former fortune-teller who was almost as violent, and an ex-ragpicker who, perhaps, even surpassed her as a virago. This woman, called, I believe, Marie Gougeard, attended the assassination of several of the hostages—including Mgr. Surat—and, as the victims fell to the ground lifeless, waved a red flag and shrieked, "Vive la Commune!"

If I remember rightly, I once heard Louise Michel speak at the club held in the church of Saint-Jacques. I have referred previously to this so-called Red Virgin of the Commune. Born at the Château of Vroncourt in the Haute-Marne in April, 1833, she was the illegitimate daughter of the owner of that estate, who provided for her and her mother until his death in 1850. She was by that time fairly well educated, and on coming to Paris somewhat later she set up a school at Batignolles. Towards the end of the Empire she began to pay attention to public questions, and expressed the most advanced political and social views. At the advent of the Commune she was almost swept away by enthusiastic fervour. I can picture her as a woman of eight-and-thirty, with an angular figure, a pale face with prominent cheekbones, a large mouth, and dark glowing eyes. She assumed the uniform of the National Guards, participated in more than one of the sorties, and was wounded whilst assisting in

the defence of the much-bombarded Fort of Issy. During the final struggle, Louise Michel displayed great nervous energy. When she was tried by the 6th Court Martial in December, 1871, she disdained all attempts at defence. She proudly acknowledged that she had taken part in setting some of the public buildings of Paris on fire, wishing, she cried, to raise a barrier of flames which should keep back the invaders of Versailles. Her only regret was that she had not killed Thiers with her own hand. She scorned, too, all idea of mercy, declaring that she was quite ready for death. She only incurred, however, a sentence of transportation to New Caledonia. At times violent almost beyond belief, at others she became a dreamer in some Utopia, a believer in universal love, fraternity, and peace. Amidst the horrible sufferings of the prisoners herded together, without the slightest regard for sanitation, on the long voyage to Noumea, she became a nurse, eager to give all such relief and comfort as circumstances allowed.

The reader will have noticed that in referring to the proceedings at the church-clubs, I mentioned various votes for the execution of the Archbishop and the other hostages. These pronouncements did not take place, however, until towards the middle of May, when the state of affairs was fast becoming more and more critical. At an earlier stage the Commune assented to some negotiations which might have resulted in the release of Mgr. Darboy, Abbé Deguerry, Judge Bonjean, and some others. The proposal, which emanated, it was said, from an "influential personage," was that in return for this step on the Commune's part, the Versailles government should release old Blanqui, the veteran

Bodies of Insurgents photographed at a Cemetery.

conspirator, who, it will be remembered, had been arrested in the South of France. Mgr. Darboy wrote to Thiers on the subject, and confided his letter to one of his *vicaires*, Abbé Lagarde, who was expressly released from prison by the Commune in order that he might convey the Archbishop's missive to Versailles. Lagarde, on the other hand, promised to return to the city and place himself at the Commune's disposal in the event of his mission proving a failure.

Flotte, a well-known old Republican of '48, was interested in the venture, and may have been the "influential personage" referred to at the time. He did not, however, accompany Lagarde on his journey. When the Abbé had delivered Mgr. Darboy's letter to Thiers, the latter asked him to wait two days for a reply, and when that interval had expired, he still deferred an answer. Blanqui, it appears, had been arrested at the house of one of his nephews, and was in ill-health at the time. He was sixty-six years of age, and was not nearly so dangerous as his reputation seemed to imply. Even if he had been released, and had then gone to Paris, his arrival there would have proved no great accession of strength to the Commune. Knowing that he was ill, his sister wrote to Thiers on his behalf, and solicited permission to nurse him. Thiers replied admitting the illness, but declining to allow any communication between Blanqui and his relations until hostilities should be at an end.

One of the greatest mistakes made by the Chief of the State at this period was, in my opinion, the line which he took over Blanqui's case. The old man had not done anything particularly dreadful, and I know of no reason to incline one to a belief

that the Commune would have failed to release Darboy and other hostages had Blanqui, on his side, been set free. But Thiers appears to have imagined that the suggestion indicated weakness on the Commune's part, and also that the Archbishop was in no real danger. Very obstinate and self-opinionated, the Head of the Government was also averse from coming to any compromise with the insurrection. Such a concession as was asked of him, might well have improved the situation generally at this moment, and in any case have saved some valuable lives; but, like some of our present-day English statesmen, Thiers was not versed in the art of making a concession gracefully, at the opportune moment, and even in exchange for valuable consideration. He stubbornly held to his own course, and thereby he greatly aggravated the position of the unfortunate hostages at Mazas and other prisons.

After keeping Abbé Lagarde waiting for an answer, he forbade him to return to Paris in accordance with his undertaking. Perhaps the Abbé remained only too willingly at Versailles. Had he really been anxious to keep his pledged word he might, surely, have found a means to go back to the capital. But he did not do so, although Darboy, who was the soul of honour, wrote to him through Washburne, the American Minister, urging him to keep his promise. Lagarde's failure to return aggravated matters still more. He was denounced, even by Conservative newspapers, as a contemptible individual who thought only of his own skin, and the Communalists came to the conclusion that no faith was to be placed in any of the promises of the clergy. In summing up the position, Gustave Maroteau, one of the most prominent of the Commune's

journalists, wrote in *La Montagne*: "*Nous biffons Dieu.* It is without prayers that we carry our dead to the grave and lead our girls to love. We hold Darboy as a hostage, and he shall die unless Blanqui is restored to us."

Nevertheless, there were yet other attempts at pacification. The mayors of all the more important localities in the department of the Seine outside Paris sent a deputation to Thiers. He then began to weaken, protested that all the stories respecting the ill-treatment of prisoners were false, offered life and liberty to all insurgents who would lay down their arms, and promised to continue paying the usual daily stipend of 1 franc 50 centimes to all the men, until normal conditions should be restored. From those provisions, however, as there could be "no conciliation between the government and the guilty," he excepted the murderers of Generals Thomas and Lecomte, and those who had inspired or assisted in those crimes. But he offered to leave open, for three or four days, a way by which offenders might quit France should they so desire. On April 27, however, Paschal Grousset, speaking on behalf of the Commune, rejected those terms, declaring that Thiers's words about "the Government and the guilty" precluded all discussion. Two days later nothing came of another great demonstration of the Freemasons, who once more sent delegates to Versailles. It was now quite clear that the struggle must continue to the bitter end.

The Commune endeavoured to cheer our spirits by announcing the arrival of 600 oxen; but, as somebody wrote on one of the proclamations: "If that is so, why are we paying thirty-five *sous* for a pound of meat?" Horse-flesh, by the way, was

being sold in ever increasing quantities. Meanwhile, razzias were continuing on the Boulevards. The virtuous Commune had ordained the suppression of vice, and in one week some hundreds of women were cleared off the streets. About the same time a raid was made on the Paris residence of Ernest Picard, Minister of the Interior, most of his ornaments and furniture being carried away.

On the Commune's side the military situation was growing more and more desperate. Hard-pressed at Neuilly and Levallois, the National Guards were gradually retreating on both points. On the night of April 19–20 a Versaillese shell struck an ammunition store at Neuilly and three houses were blown up, a good many men, including Okolowitz their commander, being injured in this affair. On the 21st there was very close fighting at Neuilly, and, though the federals offered a stout resistance, some more of their positions were carried by the regular army. Many dead bodies were then brought into Paris to be buried after being photographed at the cemeteries whither they were carried.* At this juncture the Central Committee of the National Guard, now located in the Rue de l'Entrepôt, behind the Château d'Eau (Place de la République) barracks, again raised its voice, declaring that, in presence of the anxieties of the hour, its mission was by no means ended. Before long the Committee became a positive thorn in the Commune's side.

Although the Government forces on the west were now striving to concentrate their artillery fire on the Ternes and Maillot gates of the fortifications,

* Among the illustrations to this volume is a typical photograph of the kind, from the collection of the Rev. R. Ussher of Westbury.

shells still fell inside Paris, and my friends, Captain and Mrs. Bingham, finally quitted their flat in the Rue de Tilsit, near the Arc de Triomphe, and found a temporary home in some furnished rooms in the Rue de Miromesnil, opposite the house where I was residing with my father. The regular army was making most headway, however, on the south-west of Paris, where its artillery fire was incessantly battering the fort of Issy. There was also some severe fighting in and around the village park and cemetery, where the National Guards had been reinforced by a free-corps called the Contre-Chouannerie, composed of youths attired in black and blue zouave-costumes, with sashes of red and white. At the fort of Issy the command was vested in Edmond Mégy,* who after holding out against a terrific cannonade, lost all hope when the Versaillese opened trenches before the fort, preparatory to carrying it by assault. On April 30, after the troops had carried off the guns of one of his outlying positions, he sent word to Cluseret that he could resist no longer. The War Delegate replied that he must remain at his post until the arrival of reinforcements. He answered, however, that he could not do so, but must spike his guns and retreat.

Cluseret personally collected a couple of hundred men, and hurried with them to Issy, where he found the fort already abandoned. The only person remaining there was a young fellow of nineteen, named Dufour, who calmly declared that he had stayed behind with the intention of blowing up the ruined fort directly he saw the Versaillese forces approaching. Mégy was arrested for deserting his post, and a few hours later Cluseret himself was

* See p. 118, *ante*.

revoked from his office and sent to Mazas, by a decision of the Commune's Executive Commission composed of Jules Andrieu, Paschal Grousset, Vaillant, Cournet, and Jourde. This *coup-de-théâtre* was largely brought about by the jealous Bergeret,* who had not forgiven Cluseret for removing him from his command. Moreover, the Central Committee was on Bergeret's side, and Dombrowski, Wroblewski, and other Poles were opposed to Cluseret, having sundry personal grievances against him. Thus, at an extremely critical moment, the insurrection lost the services of the most capable of all its military men.

* See pp. 91, 92, 100, *ante*.

IX

WAR DELEGATES ROSSEL AND DELESCLUZE—COMMITTEES OF PUBLIC SAFETY—FALL OF THE COLUMN—NEMESIS APPROACHES.

Rossel as War Delegate—First Committee of Public Safety—Strength of the Commune's Forces—Attacks on the South of Paris—Further Suppressions of Newspapers—Thiers as a Toper—The "Legend" of Picpus—A Gibbet for Rats—Fêtes at the Tuileries—Some of Rossel's Endeavours—Final Fall of Issy—Rossel resigns, is arrested, and escapes—Second Committee of Public Safety—Delescluze as War Delegate—Conspiracies under the Commune—Delescluze's first Proclamation—Demolition of Thiers's House—Allix insane—Demand for a Reign of Terror—Changes under Delescluze—Portentous Incidents—The Men with the Tricolour Armlets—Fall of the Vendôme Column—The Avenue Rapp Explosion—More Newspapers suppressed—Flight and Arrest of Rochefort—Eve of the Week of Bloodshed.

THE next step was to appoint a successor to Cluseret. Rossel, who was chosen, issued a manifesto accepting the "difficult functions," and adding: "I shall need your most complete, most absolute co-operation so that I may not succumb beneath the weight of circumstances." He was scarcely installed in office when the following communication reached him: "In the name and by the orders of the Marshal Commander-in-Chief of the Army, we, Major of the Trenches, hereby summon the Commander of the insurgents now assembled at Fort Issy, to surrender himself together with all the men in the said force. A delay of a quarter of an hour is granted for an answer to this summons. If the

commander of the insurgents declares in writing, on his own behalf and that of the whole garrison, that he will obey the present summons on the sole condition of being granted life and liberty (without permission, however, to remain in Paris) that favour will be granted. In default of his reply in the delay specified above, the whole garrison will incur the penalty of death. In the trenches before Fort Issy, April 30, 1871. *The Staff-Colonel, commanding the trenches :* R. LEPERCHE."

Rossel, who, as will be remembered, had served in the regular army, replied to Leperche as follows: "Paris, May 1. My dear comrade, The next time you venture to send us such an insolent summons as that of yesterday, I shall have your messenger shot in accordance with the usages of war. Your devoted comrade, ROSSEL, *Delegate of the Commune of Paris.*"

On that same 1st of May the Commune came to a momentous decision, that of appointing a Committee of Public Safety and investing it with the chief authority with respect to all defensive measures. This suggestion, which emanated from Jules Miot, the chemist, was by no means universally favoured. The very name of "Committee of Public Safety" revived memories of the dictatorial methods of the first Republic; and such an institution was regarded by several members as antagonistic to the aspirations of "social reform" which had inspired the "Communal Revolution of March 18." Thus a new Executive Committee, with fewer powers than those of a Committee of Public Safety, was preferred by the more Socialist of the Commune's members. But the Jacobin element carried the day. The "Public Safety" title recruited 34 votes against

28; and the proposed attributions of the new Committee were ratified by 45 against 23. Next, when it was a question of selecting the five men who were to compose the Committee, the aforesaid 23 members of the Commune protested and refused to vote.* One of them, moreover, Jourde, the Delegate at Finances, resigned his office, declaring that the institution of such a dictatorial Committee would be fatal to the Commune's financial interests. However, he was re-elected, and continued in his position. The men first chosen for the Committee of Public Safety (which, in part, was subsequently renewed) were Antoine Arnaud, Léo Meillet, Gabriel Ranvier, Charles Gerardin, and Félix Pyat.

The Committee and the new War Delegate, Rossel, were confronted by a very serious situation. Fort Issy had been reoccupied, and some attempts were made to repair it. But the army again cannonaded that position as well as Fort Vanves and the Hautes-Bruyères and Moulin-Saquet redoubts. It was all very well for the Committee of Public Safety to declare that it would prefer to blow up Fort Issy rather than surrender it. Little comfort was derived from any such declaration, or from the announcement that the Paris sewers were mined on one hundred and forty points, in order that the city also might be blown to pieces should the enemy ever effect an entry. On May 1 there was again some severe fighting on the south and the south-west of Paris, and all Vaugirard became alarmed. On the west, two days previously, Dombrowski

* They were A. Arnould, Andrieu, Avrial, Babick, Beslay, Clémence, Victor Clément, Courbet, E. Gerardin, Jourde, Langevin, Lefrançais, Longuet, Malon, Ostyn, Pindy, Rastoul, Serraillier, Theisz, Tridon, Vallès, Varlin, and Vermorel.

had ordered the mayor and the last inhabitants of Neuilly to withdraw into Paris, for matters were now most critical in that direction also. Further, Auteuil was suffering from the army's cannonade. The Commune was constrained to admit that it disposed of very few trained artillerymen capable of replying effectively to the bombardment.

One of Rossel's first actions was to secure a report concerning the strength of the Commune's forces. It cannot be regarded as strictly accurate. In some instances, indeed, a battalion's effective could only be given approximately. The rolls seemed to show, however, that on May 3 the marching forces (that is, the Guards outside Paris) numbered on paper 3655 officers and 92,325 men. But 242 officers and 11,339 men, included in the above figures, were reported "absent." The sedentary forces (the Guards inside the city) comprised 3252 officers and 95,100 men; but 158 of the officers and 16,435 of the men were absent. The cavalry numbered 53 officers and 779 men, with, however, only 449 horses, for which reason the Committee of Public Safety presently requisitioned all the saddle-horses in Paris. Further, the artillery was served by 5445 men, mostly, however, without any real training, as I previously mentioned. In addition, there were the various free corps—some composed of Frenchmen and others of foreigners and numbering no more than 111 officers and 3461 men. If those figures were correct they should dispose of what I regard as the silly legends respecting the "thousands" of foreigners said to have fought for the Commune.

Leaving all absentees on one side,* the report

* Over 3800 men were said to be in ambulances or hospitals.

indicated that the Commune's real forces were as follows:—

Categories.	*Officers.*	*Men.*
Guards of marching battalions	3413	80,986
„ sedentary battalions ..	3094	77,665
Free Corps	111	3,461
Cavalry	53	779
Artillery (including officers)	—	5,445
Staff-officers	788	—
Total	7459	168,336

Of the staff-officers enumerated above, 593 were on duty outside Paris. Further, some battalions of Guards included more captains than lieutenants, though that was scarcely surprising, as it was considered almost *infra dig.* to be anything less than a captain. Again, among the Guards, there were 2637 drummers and trumpeters. The report made no mention of any engineers, though there may have been some. Reviewing the figures generally, I feel that, even excluding all the absentees, they remain somewhat inflated. In publishing an estimate of their forces the Communalists were scarcely disposed to underrate their numbers. The reverse was probably the truth. In any case, even if we allow for some exaggeration and for the acknowledged weakness in artillery and cavalry, the army of the insurrection remained—in numbers, at all events—quite a formidable one.

But, on the other hand, the Versailles forces now comprised five army-corps with 150 batteries of artillery, and there could be but one issue to the struggle. Slowly but surely the government advance guards gained ground upon every side. On May 2 and 3, the chief objective of the troops appeared to be the redoubt of Moulin-Saquet

between Villejuif and Vitry and almost to the direct south of the fort of Bicêtre. Infantry, cavalry, and artillery converged towards this point from Thiais, Choisy-le-Roi, and Chevilly. Bicêtre was badly placed to resist such an advance, but it was held in check for a time by the joint fire of Moulin-Saquet and Fort Ivry. Meanwhile (May 3), Fort Vanves was being bombarded as vigorously as Issy had been. Moreover, at four o'clock in the afternoon that day some troops crossed the Seine at Sèvres, occupied the island of Saint-Germain (facing Billancourt), and set up a battery there, in order to hamper any Communalist retreat from Issy, where the Versaillese now held the park and some of the outlying village houses. I contrived to reach Issy during the day, and found the seminary crowded with Guards awaiting orders to go to the front. La Cecilia and his staff had installed themselves in a convent in the high street, and on going there to show my permit, I was struck by some of the inscriptions on the convent walls. The one above the door of a room which I entered was: "For a moment's penitence, eternal happiness shall be yours." That same evening there was close fighting in advance of Fort Issy, which was scarcely in a condition to support its defenders. Vanves, however, having been reinforced with numerous guns, thundered wildly in the gloaming.

At a later hour there came a moonlight attack in the direction of Moulin-Saquet. A good many insurgents there were asleep, and others were drinking and gambling, when the troops swept down on them. Some desperate encounters ensued in front of the redoubt. Many men were killed and nearly 300 taken prisoners. The troops also captured

eight guns, which were sent to Versailles at the same time as the prisoners, who, according to an account in the Government papers, were fastened together five by five and marched off between files of lancers. It was noticed on their arrival at Versailles that some of them were quite old men and others mere boys. The latter often snivelled, but the former looked gloomily defiant. With them were several *cantinières*, against whom the Versailles crowd particularly vented its animosity: "Down with the women! Kill the women!" were the shouts which greeted them. I must add that the troops did not remain at Moulin-Saquet, which was re-occupied by the insurgents a few days later.

Let me now turn to what was occurring in Paris. Rigault, who had recently become the Commune's Procuror or Public Prosecutor, with Ferré, Dacosta, Martainville, and Huguenot as his assessors, ordained the suppression of *L'Echo du Soir* and *La Nation Souveraine*. Cournet, Rigault's successor as Police Delegate, went even further. On May 4 he placed *Le Petit Moniteur*, *Le Petit National*, *La Petite Presse*, *Le Petit Journal*, *Le Bon-Sens*, *La France*, and *Le Temps* under interdict, declaring that these journals were simply the enemy's auxiliaries. A week later *Le Moniteur Universel*, *L'Univers*, *Le Spectateur*, *L'Étoile*, and *L'Anonyme* were also prohibited, the inevitable Commissary Le Moussu being charged with the execution of this decree. In all, twenty-seven journals had been suppressed since the advent of the insurrection, and people who could not occasionally secure some of the Versailles newspapers, were, for the most part, reduced to reading the false news and the sanguinary threats of the Communalist Press.

Meantime, the Committee of Public Safety was dismissing the Commune's *intendants*, the brothers May, although they had rendered good service in provisioning the city; and arresting old general de Martimprey, the Governor of the Invalides, who was sent to the Conciergerie, whence serious ill-health compelled his removal to the hospital known as the Maison Dubois. Only a few of the Boulevard cafés now remained open in the evening. Peters', Tortoni, and the Café Riche had very few customers indeed. The Café de Madrid, swarming with delegates and staff officers, seemed to be the real centre of Parisian life. A good deal of discontent was apparent amongst its *clientèle*. One heard frequent complaints about the foreigners serving the Commune, notably the Poles, who were said to be leading us to destruction. Food was now becoming scarcer and costlier on all sides. The Commune edicted, however, that bread should not be sold for more than 50 centimes per kilogramme. In other respects there was little or no trade at all. Many of the smaller shopkeepers saw absolute ruin and starvation staring them in the face.

Among the ridiculous stories current in the Communalist Press was one to the effect that Thiers —now usually nicknamed "President Bomba"— dined once a week with the Crown Prince of Saxony and General von Fabrice at Soisy, and invariably got as drunk as they did. Next, a perquisition at the Convent of the White Ladies at Picpus, supplied material for some more tales of the horrors of clericalism. There was said to be a subterranean passage connecting the convent with a neighbouring monastery; and we were told also that numerous instruments of torture had been found, as well, of

course, as the skeletons of unfortunate victims. Some vague statements made by three old nuns were taken as confirming various horrible surmises, and the discovery of a medical work, dealing among other subjects with childbirth, was regarded as most damning evidence. But a number of people, including several young women who had been educated at the Picpus convent, rose up to refute these slanders. It was shown that there had long been a cemetery on the spot, that the instruments of torture were simply old surgical appliances, which had been used in treating crippled inmates, and that the three old nuns were harmless lunatics, who had been allowed to end their days in the convent instead of being removed to some asylum. Briefly, the Communalist *mangeurs de prêtres* had discovered yet another mare's nest.

I remember witnessing about this time a rather amusing sight in the Rue Royale, near the corner of the Rue Saint-Honoré. On a pile of paving-stones and sandbags somebody had set up a miniature gibbet from which a dead rat was hanging. Two similar rodents were extended underneath, and the whole bore this inscription: "Fate of Thiers, MacMahon, and Ducrot, who have so long devoured the people." More interesting, certainly, was a visit to the Tuileries where one was allowed to inspect the state rooms on payment of half-a-franc. I profited by the opportunity to see if the palace had greatly suffered since imperial times. Everything seemed to be rather dusty and dingy, but otherwise there was little change. From time to time concerts were held in the Salle des Maréchaux, where the price of seats ranged from one franc fifty centimes to three francs, the proceeds going, it

was stated, to the widows and orphans of the civil war. On the first occasion, when Mme. Agar of the Comédie Française was to have recited Auguste Barbier's *Lyre d'Airain*, and Hégésippe Moreau's *Hiver*, some ten thousand people swarmed into the palace; and amidst the general confusion the performance resolved itself into repeated and uproarious singing of the "Marseillaise," the "Carmagnole," and a then popular song written in derision of Napoleon III and his family. I here quote its first and last verses, with their refrain, from memory :—

Il avait une moustache énorme,
Un grand sabre, et des croix partout—
Des croix partout !
Mais tout ça c'était pour la forme,
Et ça ne signifiait rien du tout—
Non, rien du tout !
C'était un vaillant capitaine,
Qui t'nait avant tout à sa peau—
A sa peau !
Un jour trouvant que son sabre le gêne,
Aux ennemis il en fit cadeau—
Quel beau cadeau !

Refrain : C'est le Sire de Fisch-ton-Kamp
Qui s'en va-t-en guerre,
En deux temps et trois mouvements,
Badinguet, fiche ton camp !
Le père et la mère Badingue,
A deux sous tout le paquet,
Le père et la mère Badingue,
Et le p'tit Badinguet !

Enfin, pour finir la légende
De ce mossieur qui croyait être César,—
Être César !
Sous ce grand homme de contrebande
V'là qu'on ne trouva qu'un mouchard—
Oui, qu'un mouchard !

Chez ce bonhomme-là tout était louche,
Et la morale de ce boniment—
De ce boniment !
C'est, qu'étant porté sur la bouche,
Il devait finir par ses dents—
Oui, par ses dents ! *
Refrain as above.

At another Tuileries fête which I attended, I at last heard Mme. Agar recite various verses. Some vocalists of the Théâtre Lyrique also contributed to the programme, but the success of the evening was for that full-voiced café-concert star, La Bordas, when she gave us those wonderful stanzas ending :—

"C'est la canaille, eh bien, j'en suis !"

The sentiment was one appealing to her Communard audience, who bellowed the refrain in unison. That second concert, by the way, was marked by the summary arrest of ex-deputy Schoelcher, whom Cournet sent to Mazas. Rigault intervened, however, and Schoelcher was released.

Some erroneous accounts of Rossel having appeared in the English Press, he wrote to the *Times*, protesting that he had never solicited any post from Thiers, and that his adherence to the insurrection was not due to mortified feelings but to well-considered animosity towards the old social system and the old France which had lately succumbed in so cowardly a fashion. Among Rossel's first military steps was the removal of Durassier from command of the armour-plated railway-train which fired on the Versaillese at Asnières, and the consignment of the same doughty warrior to prison

* Otherwise Sedan. The song in question eventually went the round of France. In the autumn of that same year I heard it sung by vintagers in Burgundy and on the slopes of the Rhône below Lyons.

for wearing a general's uniform to which he was not entitled. On the other hand, Rossel confirmed Dombrowski in the command of the right bank of the Seine, maintained La Cecilia in his post extending from Issy to Montrouge, and directed that Wroblewski should hold the lines going eastward from the little river Bièvre. Dombrowski, at this juncture, almost involved the Commune in serious trouble. One of his batteries, it appears, fired in the direction of Saint-Ouen, where the Germans were installed, and General von Fabrice was only pacified by the despatch of some special delegates with an abject apology. The Central Committee of the National Guard was now, once again, coming more and more to the front; indeed, whilst Rossel remained charged with the "direction" of military affairs, this Central Committee secured from the Committee of Public Safety all military administrative rights. Trouble speedily ensued.

In spite of the despairing efforts made at Issy it had become evident that such an exposed and damaged position was no longer tenable. La Cecilia, who held the chief command in this direction, incurred somewhat serious injuries by a fall from his horse, and was thereupon temporarily replaced by Lisbonne, Wetzel, and Brunel. The incessant fire from the Versaillese trenches repeatedly prevented the reinforcement and revictualling of the fort, and on May 8, after several outlying works and their guns had been captured from the insurgents, and house after house taken from them in the village, the fort itself was for the second and last time abandoned to the troops which General Faron commanded for the Government. A report of what had happened reached the Hôtel-de-Ville,

where it naturally caused consternation; but Vésinier, anxious to hoodwink the Parisians, issued a manifesto declaring it to be untrue. "The Versaillese," said he, "do not and shall not occupy the fort. The Commune has taken the energetic steps required by the situation." Nevertheless, on the morrow, one could see from the city ramparts that the tricolour was waving over the half-ruined fort.

Rossel's last order was one addressed to Brunel, urging him to hold, at any rate, the position of the college of Issy, and to link up with the other Communalist forces at Vanves. At a stormy sitting which the Commune held on May 8 several members protested against the decree placing the military administration in the hands of the Central Committee, which, however, was supported by other members. On the morrow Rossel threw up his post as War Delegate, declaring in a long letter of complaint that he had been repeatedly hampered in his efforts by the Central Committee, and that Issy had been lost in part by the insubordination of the officers there, who had refused to allow his nominee, the energetic Captain Dumont, to assume command of the fort. He declared also that he had applied for the services of 12,000 men at Issy, and that only 7000 had been provided. He therefore resigned his office and requested that he might be honoured with a cell at the prison of Mazas.

The Central Committee, on the other hand, disclaimed all hostility to Rossel, but, at the Commune's meeting on the 9th, Delescluze emphasized Rossel's charges, adding that the ex-Delegate was in despair and firmly resolved on maintaining his resignation. The Central Committee's ambition was

made manifest by an attempt it made to appoint one of its members named Moreau to the post of Delegate at War. This aroused the ire of the Commune, which summarily replaced Moreau by Delescluze and reorganized the Committee of Public Safety—Gerardin, Meillet, and Pyat retiring, and Delescluze, Gambon, and Eudes succeeding to their posts. Forthwith the new Committee declared itself *en permanence* at the Hôtel-de-Ville, and ordered that Rossel should be arrested and court-martialled. The ex-Delegate was already in the custody of Gerardin at the Hôtel-de-Ville, but at about five o'clock in the evening they quietly went off together, saying nothing about their destination. For a moment the Public Safety men were stupefied. Then they ordered that warrants should be issued for the apprehension of the runaways.

It has been said that Rossel conspired against the Commune during his brief period of office, and I believe he did so. But it was not in favour of Versailles, it was rather with the object of getting rid of a number of interfering imbeciles, placing himself absolutely at the head of the insurrection, and conducting operations with the greatest vigour. At the same time there were undoubtedly several conspiracies, intrigues, and negotiations, devised for the purpose of giving the legal Government possession of Paris. A man of my acquaintance, a certain Vicomte de Montaut, who was connected with the illustrated press, sometimes making drawings for *La Vie Parisienne*, became involved in all sorts of more or less mysterious transactions with the aforesaid object in view. Like other attempts, however, they came to little or nothing. I have not space to review them here. The reader

who is curious on the subject may consult a little volume entitled "Les Conspirations sous la Commune," by A. J. Dalsème. His narrative is somewhat involved, but, generally speaking, he is accurate in his facts.

At the time of Rossel's fall events were becoming very critical. The Versaillese were advancing on Fort Vanves and preparing to besiege it in the orthodox fashion. General Douay, moreover, crossed the Seine with the 4th Army Corps, occupied the village of Boulogne, and opened trenches before the Point-du-Jour. Uncle Toby and Corporal Trim would have revelled in some of the operations of the time. The alarm of the Communalists was indicated by articles in *Le Père Duchêne*, *Le Cri du Peuple*, and other journals. Delescluze, in his first proclamation as civilian War Delegate, admitted that the situation was serious, but argued that the city ramparts were solid. "Even though your breasts may be exposed to the shells and bullets of Versailles," said he, "a reward is ensured to you, the freeing of France and the world, the security of your homes, and the lives of your wives and your families." Briefly, he expressed the conviction that the Commune would end by prevailing. On May 10, however, when Vanves, Montrouge, and Bicêtre were again vigorously attacked, the first-named fort had to be evacuated. The bombardment there had become terrific, and the men fled in despair. Nevertheless, Delescluze at once ordered the position to be re-occupied, and this was effected a few days later, when the enemy's fire had slackened.

Henri Rochefort was now openly demanding that Thiers's house should be razed to the ground. So far it had scarcely been touched. It stood

silent, deserted, with all its shutters closed and a red flag waving from its roof. On May 11 the Committee of Public Safety ordered its immediate destruction, which was entrusted to Fontaine and Andrieu. Clémence, Courbet, Demay, Grousset, and Pyat were appointed to superintend the removal of the works of art and valuable books to the public museums and libraries. All the linen in the house was to be sent to the ambulances. The building materials and the furniture were to be sold by auction, and the proceeds distributed among the widows and orphans of the war. Finally, the site of the "Hôtel du Parricide" was to become a public square. The work of demolition began on May 12 after the valuables had been removed to the Tuileries. They were never distributed among the museums and libraries, but were destroyed when the palace was consumed by fire. An immediate result of the decrees respecting Thiers's house was that old Charles Beslay renounced all connection with the Commune.

The National Library, the galleries of the Louvre, and the Musée Carnavalet seemed to be in danger at this moment, for by certain decrees of Edouard Vaillant, Delegate at Education, all the principal officials of these establishments were summarily dismissed for their alleged complicity with Versailles. However, the Library passed into the careful charge of Élisée Reclus, the geographer.

I previously mentioned that the Élysee (otherwise the 8th) arrondissement, in which I was living with my father and my brother, was in the charge of one of the Commune's eccentricities, Jules Allix.* He did such extraordinary things there that doubts

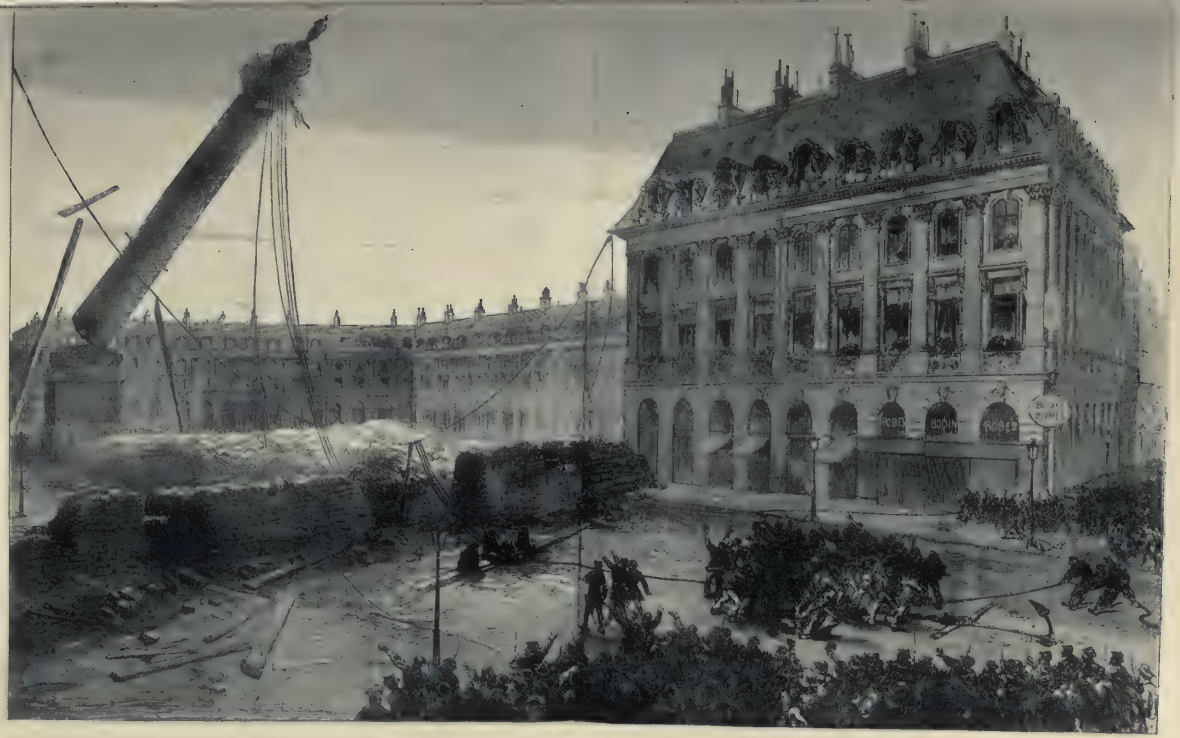
* See p. 88, *ante*.

arose as to his sanity; and, indeed, when Vallès, Vermorel, and Miot appeared at our townhall and questioned him, they deemed him to be out of his mind and ordered his arrest. Somehow or other, he momentarily contrived to regain his liberty, returned to his *mairie*, and attempted to exercise authority there, whereupon Rigault had him cast into prison once more. Charles Lullier also incurred another brief spell of imprisonment for attacking the Commune in a speech from the pulpit at Saint-Eustache. The *régime* was being attacked, however, even by some of its own newspapers. Humbert or Vermesch thundered against the "moderates" in *Le Père Duchêne*, and demanded the most extreme measures, saying: "You, Clément, ought to have remained a dyer; you, Pindy, a carpenter; you, Amouroux, a hatter; you, Arnould, an imbecile! You fear for your heads. But what do we care for your heads? Shoot down! guillotine, and save the Revolution! What! a Terror? you may ask. Yes, a Terror, fools that you are! He who desires the end wills the means. Five thousand heads would suffice to save five million souls." Finally, the same journal adjured Rossel, who was now in hiding, to repair to Belleville and concert with the true patriots the steps which should be taken to save Paris and the Revolution.

Delescluze, though in poor health, was doing what he could to effect that same object. By a decision of the Committee of Public Safety, the Commune's court-martial was enlarged and sat *en permanence*. A National Guard named Thibault, who cut some of the telegraph wires south of Paris and then fled in civilian garb, was caught, tried, and speedily shot as a traitor. Rossel's former

chief-of-staff, Colonel Masson, was lodged in prison. All persons having stores of sulphur, phosphorus, and similar products were summoned to give them up. Arms were distributed to a considerable number of female volunteers, who marched to the Hôtel-de-Ville. Gaillard *père*, the zealous builder of barricades, fell into disgrace (some of his work being described as the "infancy of the art"), and was replaced by a certain Belivier, who had other ideas and was prepared to organize a "really serious defence." All navvies, stonemasons, carpenters, and mechanicians over forty years of age were called upon to tender their services for the erection and strengthening of barricades, in return for a guaranteed daily stipend of three francs seventy-five centimes. Moreover, the military services were now centralized at the War Ministry in the Rue Saint-Dominique, and Colonel Henry was appointed chief-of-staff and acting commandant of the *place de Paris*. Civil commissaries were attached (after the fashion of the first Republic *) to Generals Dombrowski, La Cecilia, and Wroblewski, in order to stimulate their energy and report on their proceedings. An appeal was issued to all medical students, begging them to give assistance in the ambulances. Another was addressed by Paschal Grousset to the great cities of France, urging them to rise and support the capital. The same Delegate announced that the Commune's adhesion to the Convention of Geneva applied only to the clauses relating to ambulance buildings and workers, and not to any other rules

* Already on Friday, May 6, the Commune officially adopted the old Republican calendar, the decrees which it then issued being dated "16th Floréal, Year 79 of the Republic." This wiped the reigns of five sovereigns out of French history.



THE FALL OF THE VENDÔME COLUMN.

of warfare. The Commune, said Grousset, reserved the right to make use of all the terrible means which science placed at the disposal of the Revolution. Each of those incidents was symptomatic and portentous. The great desperate Adventure was coming to an end: Nemesis could already be seen approaching.

Yet there were still occasional attempts to bamboozle people, as when the Communalist Press declared that there had been a Bonapartist *coup d'état* at Versailles, MacMahon taking the place of Thiers. There were at the same time increasing rumours of conspiracy and treachery, and, as a matter of fact, the organization known as that of the *Brassards tricolores* (the tricolour-armlets) was coming into being. Devised by former officers and *non coms.* of the National Guard, the scheme was to detach as many men as possible from the Commune's cause, and induce them to support the troops whenever the latter might enter Paris. All adherents were to wear, as a distinctive sign, broad armlets of the national colours. The movement recruited a good many adherents among middle-class fugitives at Versailles. In Paris, so far as I was able to judge, it was confined to the more *bourgeois* western and south-western districts. Its recruits were not very numerous, though I certainly saw several men wearing the tricolour armlet on the very morning which followed the arrival of the troops.

Cannonading still continued on the west, the south-west, and the south of Paris. The federals finally abandoned the village of Issy. Vanves was in a terrible plight. Virtually no shelter at all was left there for the insurgents, and on the night of

May 13–14 the fort was definitely evacuated. On the 14th (Sunday) the national flag was hoisted there. At this time a Guard named Auguste Cholley made a very curious discovery. It will be remembered that the ancient catacombs of Paris extend to a considerable distance beyond the city's ramparts. Cholley sought a refuge in them at Montrouge, and whilst he was wandering through the dreadful galleries, full of skulls and bones, he discovered that he had been anticipated by some hundreds of comrades and a number of *cantinières* and ambulance nurses, who were huddled together there, often quite destitute of food, and in absolute darkness. When the last Communalists withdrew into the city from Vanves, Captain Bingham and myself saw them, looking grimy, ragged, unkempt, and savage, whilst they were being mustered on the Chaussée du Maine. I was told that the force ought to have amounted to about 8000 men. It included little more than 2000.

At this time the work of demolishing Thiers's house was proceeding apace. The roof was off and only the walls remained standing. Tuesday, May 16, at last witnessed the pulling down of the Vendôme column. Already, at the meeting of the Commune on April 27, there had been complaints respecting the delay in demolishing this monument of war and tyranny. As I previously mentioned, it was not really the question of the Vendôme column which drew the great painter Courbet into the vortex of the Commune; but it is undoubtedly true that, at the time of the German siege of Paris, Courbet proposed that the column should be pulled down and melted in conjunction with all the French and German guns of the period, with the view of

erecting with the metal a new and gigantic monument which should be dedicated to universal peace and republicanism. Naturally, that Utopian idea found few supporters even among the French, and certainly none on the side of Bismarck's "big battalions." At the Commune's sitting on April 2, however, both Courbet and J. B. Clément complained of the delay in pulling down the column, whereupon they were assured by Paschal Grousset and Andrieu that it was only a matter of a few days, and that the work had been entrusted to two engineers of ability, who assumed all responsibility for the undertaking. May 5 was the next date fixed for the demolition, but it went by without anything being done, and the Commune thereupon decided that there should be a fine of £20 for each day's delay, the amount to be deducted from the original contract price for the demolition, which was no less than £1400.

The erection of the Vendôme column, known also as the Colonne d'Austerlitz and the Colonne de la Grande Armée, was an idea suggested to Napoleon by Trajan's column at Rome. His first decree respecting it was issued in October, 1803, when he proposed that the column to be raised in Paris should be decorated with allegorical figures and surmounted by an effigy of Charlemagne. But in March, 1806, Champagny proposed that the monument should commemorate the glorious campaign of the previous year, and that its summit should be crowned with a statue of the Prince "who was so greatly cherished by the French." Napoleon, now Emperor, assented to the suggestion, and placed at the disposal of the founders entrusted with the work, sixty-seven tons of bronze, represented by

guns captured from the Austrian and Russian armies. The bas-reliefs of the pedestal were designed by Gérard, Renaud, and Beauvallet; those of the column itself by a sculptor named Bergeret, whose namesake, curiously enough, figured prominently in the demolition in 1871. In height, the column exceeded 144 feet, its diameter was nearly 14 feet, and it rested on piles which had previously supported Girardon's statue of Louis XIV, removed during the first Revolution.

The original inscription above the doorway leading to the steps, by which the column was ascended, ran as follows:—

NAPOLEO. IMP. AVG.
MONVMENTVM. BELLI. GERMANICI.
ANNO. MDCCV.
TRIMESTRI. SPATIO. DVCTV. SVI. PROFLIGATI.
EX. ÆRE. CAPTO.
GLORIÆ. EXERCITVS. MAXIMI. DICAVIT.

On the summit was set a statue by Chaudet representing Napoleon in classic garb, with a laurel crown round his head, and, in his hand, a small antique winged figure of Victory, standing on a globe. This statue was not set in position until the fatal year of 1812. In May, 1814, at the first fall of the Empire, a number of ardent Royalists, M. de Montbadon, Sosthène de la Rochefoucauld, the Prince de Polignac, the Count de Semallé, and the notorious Guerry de Maubreuil (a record of whose career I wrote some years ago *), endeavoured to pull the imperial statue to the ground; but their cables broke, and it became necessary to requisition

* "The Wild Marquis" (Chatto and Windus).

the services of Pasquier, the founder both of the statue and of the column's spiral bas-reliefs. Another Pasquier, Prefect of Police, and Count de Rochechouart, aide-de-camp to Alexander of Russia, ordered the founder to lower the statue under penalty of death; and he did so, the operation costing about £200; whereupon the effigy of the Corsican ogre was replaced by the Bourbon standard of white silk, embroidered with golden fleurs-de-lys. As for the statue, it was melted down, the material being employed for Baron Lemot's equestrian effigy of Henri Quatre, which was set up on the Pont Neuf. Thus a Bonaparte was turned into a Bourbon.

Time elapsed, but at last, in 1827, Victor Hugo, helping to revive the cult of the great Captain, penned his famous "Ode to the Column":—

O monument vengeur! trophée indélébile!
Bronze qui, tournoyant sur ta base immobile,
Sembles porter au ciel ta gloire et ton néant;
Et, de tout ce qu' a fait une main colossale,
Seul es resté debout, ruine triomphale
De l'édifice du géant!

Yet another four years went by, and then Louis-Philippe, King of the French, decreed that a statue of Napoleon should again be set upon the summit of the Column of Austerlitz. The design selected for this statue was that of the younger Seurre, who portrayed the Emperor in the grey riding-coat and little cocked-hat of *le petit caporal*. Twelve Austrian guns which had remained in the citadel of Metz since 1805, were utilized in casting that statue which was inaugurated in 1833.

Once more time brought its changes. Napoleon III was writing the life of Cæsar, and thought it appropriate to turn *le petit caporal* once more into

a Roman or Romanesque Emperor. So, in 1864, Seurre's statue was lowered and consigned to the courtyard of the Invalides, whence it was subsequently removed to the Rond-Point de Courbevoie; and, in its stead, an effigy of the Cæsarian type by Dumont was hoisted to the summit of the column in the Place Vendôme. In its hand was placed the identical statuette of Victory which Chaudet's figure had held, and which had escaped destruction at the Restoration of the Bourbons.

Three times a year, during the Second Empire (March 20, May 5, and August 15 *) the old veterans of the Invalides came to hang wreaths of *immortelles* on the pedestal and the railings of the column. On several occasions, during the last period of the imperial rule, I saw them there—blanched, bent, and tottering, wearing the curious uniforms, the buttoned facings, the white breeches, the long black gaiters, the elongated bearskins, the big blue shakos, the many varied plumes, tufts, and panaches, the ornate helmets, and the exaggerated chapskas, which had figured in many a memorable battle when the Great Man's victorious legions overran the cowering continent of Europe. And, curious to relate, a few days before the Commune of 1871 hauled the column to the ground, old survivors of Brienne, Montmirail, La Fêre Champenoise, and Waterloo—one-armed and one-legged, seared, wizened, husky septuagenarians, octogenarians, and nonagenarians crawled as best they could as far as the Rue Castiglione to gaze wistfully, with enfeebled eyes, and for the last time, at the effigy of their

* March 20, return of Napoleon to Paris from Elba; August 15, his birthday; May 5, the anniversary of his death.

well-loved Emperor and the column which proclaimed his glory. Auguste Barbier, I know, stigmatized the monument as :—

> Ce bronze que jamais ne regardent les mères,
> Ce bronze grandi sous leurs pleurs ;

and, before the column was demolished in 1871, somebody hung upon its pedestal a card bearing the following verse :—

> Tyran, juché sur cette échasse,
> Si le sang que tu fis verser
> Pouvait tenir dans cette place
> Tu le boirais sans te baisser.

Nevertheless, to those old veterans the column, like the Arc de Triomphe de l'Étoile, was a stirring memento of the brave days of their gallant, hard-fighting, victorious youth.

It had been announced officially that it would fall at two o'clock in the afternoon of May 16. Long before the appointed hour the Rue de la Paix was a sea of heads. That is, no doubt, a very poor metaphor ; but it is not such exaggeration as was the case when one of the Paris correspondents of the English Press telegraphed to London, after Saisset's demonstration * : " The Rue de la Paix is one pool of blood." It was, I think, the same imaginative gentleman (who shall be nameless here) who wrote : " The Vendôme column has just fallen," though he did so some days before that happened, and had merely to look out of his window to realize that he was telling a fib. In journalism, however, as in many other matters, there is such a thing as more or less intelligent " anticipation."

On May 16, at all events, the column was really

* See pp. 70 *et seq.*, *ante*.

lowered to the ground. We were all there—either in the Rue de la Paix, or the Rue de Castiglione, or in some side-street whence a glimpse of the column could be obtained. I myself, my father and my brother Arthur were in the Rue de la Paix. Every balcony there was crowded, heads peeped out of every window, and no little anxiety was blended with the general excitement, for there might be some havoc should the column collide in its fall with one or another building. Nothing of that kind happened; but the "wait" was a very long one. In vain did bands of music strive to beguile us with the "Marseillaise," the "Chant des Girondins," and the "Chant du Départ." In vain did sundry Delegates of the Commune appear, in gold-braided uniforms, or displaying gaudy sashes or other insignia, on the balcony of the Ministry of Justice, whence, early in the Franco-German War, I had heard Émile Ollivier shouting himself hoarse whilst promising to arm those same National Guards who were now intent on pulling down one of the greatest monuments to their country's glory.

The capstans began to work. But all at once there came a strange, strident sound. Did it emanate from the column? Everybody became nervous, anxious, excited. Was there going to be an accident —perhaps a disaster? No! only one of the cables fixed to the summit of the column had snapped. That, unfortunately, meant a further delay, and, in fact, nearly two hours elapsed before everything was made right again. Meantime, we were regaled with more "Marseillaise," more "Chant du Départ," more "Chant des Girondins." According to my watch (as noted in my diary) operations only became effective at a quarter-past five o'clock. Even then

the capstans performed their work very slowly, and the half-hour was reached before the column really began to oscillate. Swiftly, however, came the sequel. In another instant the great pile was bending in our direction. Some of the lower plates of bronze had been removed and some of the masonry, just above the pedestal, cut to a certain depth, as is shown in one of the illustrations to this volume. A great bed of *fascines*, sand, and manure, had been prepared for the reception of the lofty pile. It came down in its entirety (as shown in the engraving which the *Illustrated London News* has allowed me to reproduce) until a certain angle was reached. Then, all at once, it split into three sections, and in that wise fell upon the bed prepared for it. There was a loud thud! Particles of manure and sand arose, cloud-like, and were carried hither and thither. The ground trembled beneath one, houses shook, windows rattled, but there was no damage.

As the dust cleared away, I perceived Glais-Bizoin, one of Gambetta's coadjutors during the war in the provinces, standing on the column's pedestal, waving his hat, with a queer smile upon his punchinello face. Near him stood "General" Bergeret and several Guards, waving large red flags. Loud were the shouts of "Vive la Commune!" Right quickly did one of the Guard's bands strike up the "Marseillaise," but amidst and above it I suddenly heard the strains of "Hail Columbia!" played violently on a piano by some Yankee girl belonging to a party of Americans who had installed themselves on the first floor of the Hôtel Mirabeau. They came out on to the balcony and were loud in their plaudits. In those days the cult of Napoleon had no disciples in the United States. Both New

Yorkists and Bostonians knew but one hero—the George Washington, who, unlike Napoleon, never lied.

I do not remember whether my father and my brother followed me, but, eel-like,* and in spite of the fact that some of the Commune's "cavalry" rode up to hold the crowd in check, I wriggled through the throng, and at last, on a great bed of dung, I perceived the French Cæsar lying prone—decapitated by his fall, and with one arm broken. But the shouts of "Vive la Commune!" suddenly subsided. General Bergeret was holding forth from the summit of the column's pedestal; and after him came Miot, Ranvier, and other infinitesimal individuals who were bent on glorifying their wonderful achievement. It is as well, perhaps, that I should add here that the National Assembly afterwards decreed that the column should be set up once more, crowned this time by a statue of France. So far as the column itself was concerned, that decree was carried into effect, but no effigy of France was ever carved or cast. In lieu thereof, Dumont's statue was repaired by Charnod and Pinelli, and hoisted to the summit of the restored column in December, 1875. It no longer held the antique statuette of Victory, however. That had disappeared even before the column was cast down. Rumour said that it had been purchased for a good round sum by some American capitalist, and possibly it is nowadays in Chicago or Minneapolis. To replace it, Antonin Mercié, the sculptor of the famous bas-relief "Gloria Victis," modelled a little *figurine*, and it is that which the Cæsar of the Place Vendôme nowadays holds in his hand.

* I mentioned in "My Days of Adventure" that "the Eel" was one of my nicknames in those distant times.

I was forgetting to mention that, before the column fell, an American paid no less than £80 for the privilege of ascending it. He wished to be the last to do so.

My pen has run away with me, perhaps, in connection with this French counterpart of the famous Roman monument. But nowadays Napoleon's name is still a household word, whereas Trajan's is only remembered by scholars. Yet the latter was, perhaps, the better man. However that may be, I must return to my chronicle of the Commune's last days, before Nemesis, long hovering near, at last swooped down and confounded it.

There was a terrible accident on the day after the column fell. I call it an accident, advisedly, because, although the Communalists imputed the occurrence to the machinations of the Versailles Government, there is not a tittle of evidence to that effect. Briefly, on May 17, half Paris was shaken by a terrible explosion. A fire broke out in the great cartridge works in the Avenue Rapp, close to the École militaire. It seems impossible that this can have been caused by any shell from the Versaillese batteries. It was due, probably, to the carelessness of one or another of the scores of women who were employed in the works. In any case, there was a disastrous explosion. Four houses were reduced to ruins, a few people were killed, and at least fifty severely injured. The foot pavements, all around, were strewn with fragments of glass and bits of cartridges. A great column of smoke arose and spread over the whole district of Grenelle. Then flames burst forth, rising in great fiery tongues towards the bright blue sky. That conflagration was an omen of what would soon ensue.

Day by day, the efforts of the Communalists became more and more desperate. Outside the city there was fighting here, there, and everywhere. The Committee of Public Safety decreed that every train coming to the capital (chiefly by the Eastern and Northern lines) should be inspected and searched by delegates, commissaries, and Guards before actually reaching the city. All holders of chemical products were warned that if they did not declare the stocks they held, the latter would be peremptorily confiscated. All stocks of petroleum and other mineral oils were also to be notified to the authorities. The telegraph service was reserved for military purposes. Builders, masons, navvies, were summoned to report themselves at the Ministry of War. On every side there were signs of feverish preparation to resist the regular army should it contrive to enter the city.

In other respects there were many minor incidents of the kind to which we had been growing accustomed since March 18. There was another razzia at Peters's, otherwise the Café Américain. Sundry officers, who were found "banquetting" with women of the Boulevards, were arrested, degraded, and sent with pick and shovel to dig trenches in advance of Fort Bicêtre, their female companions being committed to the prison of Saint-Lazare. At the same time the posses of the National Guards pounced upon some foreigners who were drinking coffee outside the café. They arrested a party composed of the Russian Consul, Elyott Bower, the correspondent of the *Morning Advertiser*,* E. S. Dallas of *The Times*, and other Englishmen, who were carried off to the Hôtel-de-Ville, vilified there, and

* See "My Days of Adventure."

only released on the following morning. Bower wrote a pungent letter of complaint to *La Vérité*, which was afterwards constrained to apologise to the officials of the Commune—the latter declaring that, if foreign diplomatists and others chose to frequent notorious Boulevard houses, they had no right to complain of some inconvenience. There were, however, so few Boulevardian cafés still open, that one could not pick and choose among them when one desired a little refreshment. Apropos of the razzias at Peters's and other establishments, I may add that a decree went forth ordering the arrest of all drunkards and *demi-mondaines*, and edicting that every *marchand de vin* serving one or the other should be fined. Paris, however, like London, was not to be made moral and well-conducted by enactments of the authorities.

Fresh stories of corpses and skeletons found in churches were now current. The long-deferred demolition of the Chapelle Expiatoire * was just beginning. Delegate Édouard Vaillant was devising a new scheme for the education of girls. The caricaturist Gill, who some years later died insane, afflicted with *la folie des grandeurs*, was appointed curator of the Luxembourg museum. The galleries of the Louvre were closed, however, with a view to reorganization by a body of artists. Nevertheless, the Commune desired to provide us with some relaxation and amusement. A special Tuileries concert was announced for the 22nd. The artistes of the Opera had promised to surpass themselves, we were told; and, for the first time since 1793, we were to hear Gossec's *Hymne à la Liberté*. As for the Opera itself (then in the Rue Lepelletier, for the present

* See p. 237, *ante*.

edifice was then in an unfinished state), Director Garnier was being urged to give us an inaugural concert, at which Madame Gueymard-Lauters was to be the "star." Nevertheless, whilst striving to stimulate enterprise in this respect, our rulers suppressed all theatrical subventions.

They also allowed us to read less and less. On May 18 they again suppressed several journals, including the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. Six other periodicals had to suspend publication by order simply of Commissary Le Moussu; and only seventeen papers were left to us—*Le Journal Officiel*, *Le Rappel*, *Le Vengeur*, *Le Cri du Peuple*, *Le Reveil du Peuple*, *Le Père Duchêne*, *Paris-Libre*, *Le Tribun du Peuple*, *Le Salut Public*, *La Vérité*, *Le Journal Populaire*, *Le Bulletin du Jour*, *La Politique*, *La Constitution*, *L'Avant-Garde*, *L'Estafette*, and *Le Fédéraliste*—all of these being more or less Communalist organs. Some of them had very small sales indeed; and the great majority disappeared on the downfall of the insurrection. I should add that when the last suppression of papers occurred, the Committee of Public Safety edicted that, in future, all articles should be signed, that all attacks on the Commune should render their authors liable to be court-martialled, and that all printers should be prosecuted as accomplices. Free speech was virtually abolished. Thus did Jacobinism triumph—as, under the circumstances, it was bound to triumph—over the "moderates" of the *régime*. In one way or another, that kind of thing has repeatedly happened in politics of more recent years. One and another "Liberal" party has gone down, and others may die out also. The *via media* has become a counsel of perfection, seldom if ever

followed. On every side, in every country, halfway men are going to the wall.

There were constant squabbles between the Commune and the Committee of Public Safety. Individual members also quarrelled, often very bitterly; and, although Delescluze devoted himself zealously to his duties as Delegate at War, there was no continuity of general policy. At one of the Commune's sittings Jourde brought up an interesting report concerning the financial position. It covered the period from March 20 until the end of April. It appeared from this report that the insurrection had found a sum of 4,658,000 francs at the various public offices; and that it had afterwards secured nearly 22,000,000 francs. Of that amount 7,750,000 francs had been derived from the Bank of France; 8,500,000 francs from the *octroi* service; and 1,760,000 francs from the tobacco monopoly. The balance had come chiefly from the contributions of the railway companies, the market-dues, registration and stamp fees, and payments made by the department of public works. In spite of many appeals comparatively few people had paid the ordinary taxes. On the other hand, 1,445,000 francs had been paid to the Paris municipalities; 20,000,000 francs to the War Department; 1,800,000 francs to the Intendance or Commissariat; 235,000 francs to the Police Department; 112,000 francs to that for Foreign Affairs; and 1,500,000 francs had been distributed among the hospitals, the libraries, the national printing works, the fire brigade, the street services, etc. Briefly, Jourde set forth that during the period in question he had received 26,013,916 francs 70 centimes; that he had expended 25,138,089 francs 12 centimes; and

that at the end of April he had in hand a balance of 875,827 francs 58 centimes. Jourde was a punctilious accountant, and we may take it that his figures were correct. It followed that, from March 20 to April 30, the Commune had "run" Paris and its military operations for about one million sterling in hard cash. But no account was taken of many requisitions and so forth, for which unpaid *bons* had been given. These probably represented another £250,000 for the period I have mentioned, and the expenditure of another three weeks or so had to be added to what was set forth in the report.

There is one matter which I ought to have mentioned earlier. About the middle of April the Socialist members of the Commune carried a proposal for a report on all the closed factories and workshops of Paris and the various tools and appliances which they might contain, with a view to establishing co-operative societies of workmen, to whom employers were to be compelled to cede their property on terms which were to be arranged. About the same time began a distribution of the pledges lodged with the Mont de Piété, this being carried out in accordance with somewhat complicated regulations which established various "series" of pawned articles. These were still being given up in batches when the regular troops entered Paris.

A few days previously, there occurred a serious split in the Commune's ranks. The Socialist minority had two grievances—the establishment of the Committee of Public Safety, and the encroachments of the Central Committee of the National Guard. With respect to the former body, the minority drew up a protest, printed by the newspapers at its disposal, in which it complained that

the Commune had abandoned all direct responsibility and thrown to the winds its original policy of political and social reform. This protest was signed on May 15 by Beslay, Jourde, Theisz, Lefrançais, E. Gerardin, Vermorel, Clémence, Andrien, Serraillier, Longuet, Arthur Arnould, V. Clément, Avrial, Ostyn, Franckel, Pindy, Arnould, Vallès, Tridon, Varlin, Malon, and Courbet, who threatened that they would no longer attend the Commune's deliberations. There was a great uproar over the affair, the Jacobin organs, including *Le Père Duchêne*, violently imputing cowardice to the signatories of the protest, who, it was said, now that a great crisis was at hand, thought of nothing but saving their skins. Most of these members, however, attended a meeting of the Commune on May 17, when there was a passionate debate. Grousset at last tried to pour oil on the breakers, and in a measure succeeded in doing so, the majority agreeing to forgive their antagonists. Nevertheless, the breach remained unhealed so far as many men were concerned.

At this same meeting there was some question of a *cantinière* of the National Guard, who, it was alleged, had been assaulted and afterwards murdered by some of the Versaillese soldiery. Urbain proposed to his colleagues that, by way of retaliation, some of the hostages—he first suggested two, and afterwards five—should be immediately put to death. Although, however, reprisals of this description were, so to say, already "in the air," the proposal did not receive immediate effect. A couple of days later the Protestant clergy of Paris again raised its voice in protest against extreme measures with respect to the hostages. It shuddered, it said,

at the thought that the Commune should take to the path of sanguinary reprisals and political executions, and implored it to desist from any such course. The Rev. Dr. Forbes, the Rev. Mr. Cook, and Mr. (later Sir) J. R. McCormack were among the Englishmen signing that memorial.

Although the Commune still left the question of the fate of the hostages in abeyance, it continued to add to their number. Numerous men of the former Garde de Paris (now the Garde Républicaine) were brought before the Jury d'Accusation which met in the Assize Court at the Palais de Justice, and most of them were sent to prison as hostages. On this occasion Raoul Rigault's representative, a man named Huguenot, apologized for the fact that a picture of the Crucifixion had been left hanging behind the bench, and promised that, on the next occasion, it should be replaced by a bust of "Marianne"—otherwise the Red Republic. Elsewhere, the Commune's Court Martial was busy. Various deserters and other "traitors" were brought before it, including a Colonel van Ostal and a Lieut.-Colonel Daviot, who were charged with cowardly abandoning the fort of Issy. They received sentences of ten and fifteen years' solitary confinement, and it was ordered that their battalion of the National Guard, the 115th, should be at once disarmed and dissolved.

I cannot say what became of those officers, but they certainly never served their time. The Commune had no years, nor even months, before it. Its very days were numbered. Nemesis was nearer than ever, and more and more impatient to strike. At this juncture the imprisoned Cluseret suddenly raised his voice, claiming his seat as a member of

the Government, and asking for an open trial, and the privilege of co-operating in the defence of Paris. There was a brief inquiry into his case and he was set free. So was Brunel, who had recently been arrested. Gaillard père, the Barricader, was removed from office, however, and Émile Clément was consigned to prison for having offered his services to the imperial police many years previously. It is an old saying that, When a ship is sinking the rats flee. Henri Rochefort, whose position had long been very equivocal, thought it time to think of his own safety. One morning his newspaper, *Le Mot d'Ordre*, ceased to appear, and the next we heard of him was that he had stolen out of Paris—going eastward, with the intention, probably, of seeking an asylum in Switzerland—but had been arrested by the Gendarmerie at Meaux, and then conveyed as a prisoner to Versailles. His arrest took place on Friday, May 19. On the evening of the ensuing Sunday the regular army at last entered Paris.

X

THE WEEK OF BLOODSHED

I. The First Days

Thiers's Policy towards the Commune—MacMahon's Report on the Military Operations—His Plan for taking Paris—Remissness of the Commune—Sunday, May 21—Captain Bingham and Sir Edward Malet—Jules Ducatel and the Entry of the Troops—MacMahon's six Army Corps—Seizure of the Point-du-Jour, Passy, and Auteuil—Bruat and Cissey at Grenelle—The Trocadero carried—Montmartre ordered to bombard it—Monday, May 22—Proclamation of Revolutionary War—I sketch the Attack on the Elysée—Character of the Street Fighting—A Woman avenges her Insurgent Son—An exciting adventure with Captain Bingham—Communalist Movements—Steady advance of the Troops—Tuesday, the 23rd—Capture of Montmartre—Operations on the South of Paris—Insurgent Manifestoes and Appeals—The First Conflagrations.

THIERS was a very able man and rendered great services to his country. There is no disputing the zeal he displayed during the latter part of the Franco-German War, when he journeyed from capital to capital, striving to obtain such foreign intervention as might conduce to less onerous terms of peace than those which were fixed by Bismarck. Nor can one overlook all that Thiers did afterwards to free the territory of France from the presence of her invaders. But he made more than one mistake in dealing with the Commune. I showed in an early chapter of this volume that he was forced to evacuate Paris after the rising of March 18; but I cannot justify some of his subsequent policy.

If I were writing an Apology for him I could only plead that he was not altogether a free agent, and that, whilst on one hand he had to contend with the Commune, on the other he had to deal with the uncompromising royalist majority of the National Assembly. Nevertheless, in the early days of the insurrection that majority was in such a state of alarm and confusion that if Thiers had chosen he might have done much as he pleased with it. But although he clearly realized the necessity of maintaining a Republican form of Government, he was not a man of broad, liberal views, one really in touch and sympathy with the aspirations of the democracy.

He only really broke away from his past during his very last days. He did not go forward to the masses as he might have done. He did not deal quickly enough with some of the grievances, enumerated in my early chapters, which gave a kind of *raison d'être* and brought so many adherents to the Commune. Moreover, although the insurrection had compelled him to quit the city, he did not fully realize its strength. He did not imagine it capable of offering the resistance which it did. A believer in trained armies, he, like so many people at that time, underrated the National Guards, and regarded the threats of their leaders as mere braggadocio. The failure of the first Communalist sorties under Bergeret, Duval, and Eudes confirmed him in those views of his, and the prolongation of the city's resistance filled him with amazement.

Feeling confident that he would soon subdue rebellious Paris, and following, rather than leading, the majority of the Assembly, he was apt to trifle every time that an olive-branch was extended to

him, greeting it only with vague, uncertain promises of redress in return for complete submission. At last, in response to the appeal of the mayors of the department of the Seine,* who were supported also by the municipalities of some large provincial cities, he made something like a definite offer of immunity for the great bulk of the insurgents. This, however, raised the ire of the more convinced Royalists of the Assembly, who were against all compromise; and one of them, Mortimer Ternaux, best known by his history of the Terror of '93, indignantly took Thiers to task for offering to leave a means of escape open to the ringleaders of the insurrection.

Thiers, who could not deny it (Ternaux had information from the mayor of Bordeaux), preferred to regard himself as insulted by the manner in which Ternaux spoke, and, an acrimonious debate ensuing, he threatened to resign his office should the Assembly be dissatisfied with him. This was, I think, the first time that the little man employed the threat of resignation as a means of curbing the Assembly. It served him on this occasion, as on some later ones; but, as we know, he was ultimately taken at his word. However, his offer to the Commune came a great deal too late, and was promptly rejected by the men of the Hôtel-de-Ville.

I dealt previously with the suggested release of Blanqui, in return for which the Archbishop of Paris and other hostages were to have been set at liberty. Thiers, however, did not, would not, believe that the hostages were in real danger. In this respect, again, his judgment was seriously at fault. He had written a history of the great Revolution;

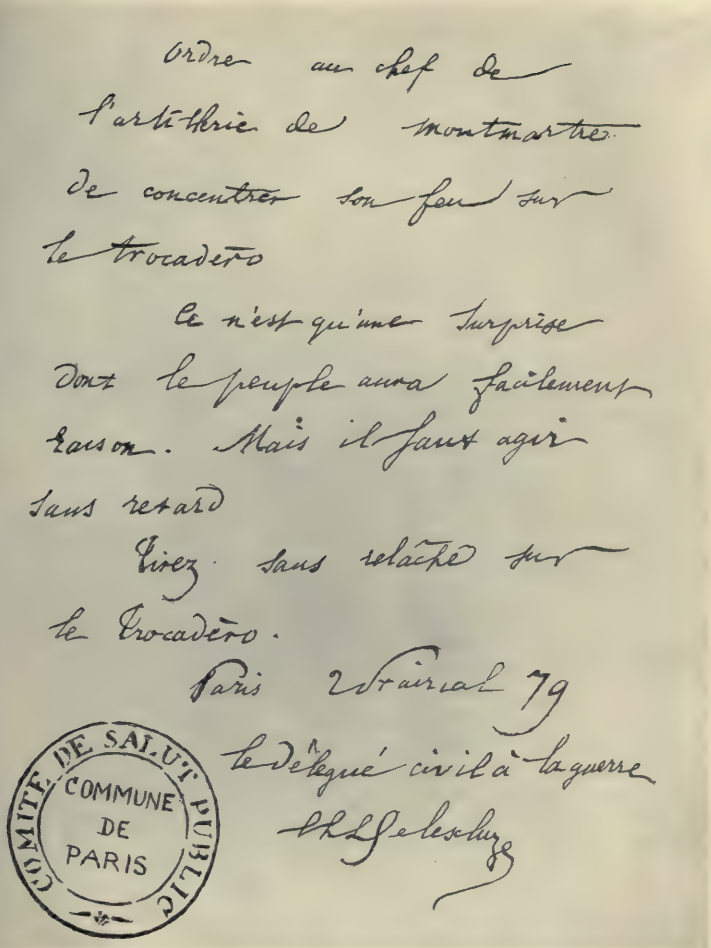
* See p. 251, *ante*.

nearly the whole of his long life had been spent in Paris, and he knew, or ought to have known, the real character of the Parisian extremists. But he almost laughed at threats. There is evidence to show that, down to the very eve of the Week of Bloodshed, he still scouted the repeated menaces of conflagration and murder. "They talk of that," he remarked with superb assurance, "but, you will see, they will never do it." Such were his almost fatuous words when dire calamity was impending. I do not wish to besmirch Thiers's character; I readily admit his greatness in various respects; but in regard to the Commune there were many and repeated miscalculations on his part. Shrewd he often was, but more frequently in petty than in vital matters.

Of course Thiers was not the only person who made miscalculations at that time. Many might be imputed to the military men whom he employed. After the fall of the Commune, Marshal MacMahon issued a long report respecting the operations effected under his command. This report abounds in errors which cannot be imputed to the marshal himself, as in many respects he was forced to rely on the reports addressed to him by subordinate commanders. Several inaccuracies occur, however, in the account of the fighting inside Paris. There are instances in which certain positions, said to have been occupied on such and such a day, were not really taken until twenty-four or even forty-eight hours afterwards. A glaring case of this description is that of the Montparnasse railway-station. The report, indeed, assumes much too often that the orders issued for a certain day were then actually carried into effect. Subject to that criticism this

account of the hostilities—prepared probably by some of MacMahon's staff-officers (I have a difficulty in believing that he drafted it himself)—remains a useful and important document.

I have already said so much about the fighting outside Paris that I do not propose to analyze what the report states on that subject. But I must point out that, according to the Marshal, his one real objective, from the very outset, was precisely that point of western Paris by which, fortuitously, an entry into the city was at last effected. That is to say, he aimed at entering by way of the so-called Point-du-Jour, the district fringing the right bank of the Seine, just south of Auteuil and Passy. On that district being secured, one part of MacMahon's forces was to go northward by way chiefly of the so-called military boulevards inside the ramparts, and another was to go southward, first crossing the Seine by the Point-du-Jour viaduct; whilst a central column was to march upon the Trocadero and the Élysée district. That programme was eventually carried out. If ever there was any intention of entering Paris by way of Neuilly it was abandoned on account of the strenuous opposition which the Communalists offered on that point. Unless, however, Neuilly should be carried by the troops, or the Communalist forces there reduced virtually to the last extremity, the northern column of the army advancing from the Point-du-Jour might find itself in serious danger. In the same way, the reduction of Forts Issy and Vanves was necessary for the safety of the operations in the southern part of Paris. Such were the reasons lying behind all the desperate preliminary fighting on the points which I have mentioned.


Ordre au chef de
l'artillerie de Montmartre
de concentrer son feu sur
le Trocadero

Ce n'est qu'une surprise
dont le peuple aura facilement
raison. Mais il faut agir
sans retard

Tirez sans relâche sur
le Trocadero.

Paris 2 Floréal 79

le Délégué civil à la guerre
Ch. Delescluze

COMITÉ DE SAL. PUBLIC
COMMUNE DE PARIS

DELESCLUZE'S ORDER TO BOMBARD THE TROCADERO.

It is probable that Cluseret, the best military man on the Commune's side, foresaw that the Point-du-Jour, Auteuil and Passy would be the real objectives of the Versaillese army ; for it was he who installed a battery on the Trocadero, and another in the grounds of the Château de la Muette, on the fringe of the Bois de Boulogne, near Passy.* If Cluseret had still been War Delegate when the army entered the city, the Trocadero and La Muette might perhaps have been more numerously and more stoutly defended.

The weather on Sunday, May 21, was, as usual, fine and bright. In central Paris the streets were thronged with people, and there was a well-attended concert in the Tuileries garden. Few of all those folk imagined that the critical moment had arrived. For some days there had certainly been increasing anxiety at the Hôtel-de-Ville, but I doubt even if Delescluze, the War Delegate, realized that the end was so very near. Only a few people formed a correct estimate of the situation, knowing that trenches had been dug and breaching batteries installed with the object of carrying the ramparts between the Point-du-Jour and Auteuil by assault. On the previous night, moreover, the troops had carried the last Communalist positions at Issy, Vanves and Malakoff, and were therefore ready to advance upon the south-western ramparts also.

As a matter of fact, it was not intended that there should be an assault until the following Tuesday, but Captain Bingham, of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, who at this period was so often my mentor, guide and

* Associated with Marie Antoinette when she arrived in Paris to marry the future Louis XVI, La Muette belonged at the time of the Commune to the Érard family, of pianoforte celebrity

friend—some of my Neuilly expeditions were made with him and Charles Austin of the *Times*—had so strong a presentiment of the impending entry of the army, that on the Sunday evening he carried off Mr. (later Sir Edward) Malet, our *Chargé d'affaires*, and some other embassy officials, to the rooms which he had lately taken in the Rue de Miromesnil (they faced the house where I was living) in order that, at the first signal, they might all go to witness the arrival of MacMahon's forces. Pending the fateful moment they sat down and played whist, prolonging their diversion until midnight, when, there having been no sign of anything unusual, the gentlemen of the embassy decided to regain their penates. Bingham went with them down the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, and on the way they met a battalion of National Guards hurrying at quick-step to some unknown destination. Accosting one of the men Bingham inquired if there was anything fresh, but the other, glaring at him, wished to know who he was and what business he had to be there. Discretion was the best policy under the circumstances, so Bingham turned away and the guard rejoined his comrades. Though Bingham went quietly to bed, still uncertain of the actual position, his forebodings had not deceived him. If he and Mr. Malet, instead of playing whist that evening, had taken a constitutional in the direction of the western ramparts of Paris they would probably have seen—of course at some risk to themselves—something of the entry of MacMahon's army and the first fighting inside the city.

At about three o'clock in the afternoon that Sunday, some of the Versaillese troops in the trenches beyond the Point-du-Jour saw a man waving a

white handkerchief from the ramparts near the Porte de Saint-Cloud.* The signal was at first regarded with considerable suspicion, some act of treachery being feared; but nobody, beyond the individual in question, being seen, a naval captain named Trèves at last went forward to parley with him, and learnt that, owing to the terrific fire of the Government batteries, the ramparts on this point had been abandoned, and that there was nothing to prevent the troops from entering the city. The man who gave this news was named Jules Ducatel, and had been a foreman or overseer in the roads and bridges service of the municipality. He resided in the district, and had made, it seems, some previous attempts to get into communication with the troops, the vigorous bombardment of the ramparts having more than once compelled the Communalists to seek cover some little distance off. Captain Trèves immediately took advantage of Ducatel's tidings, and the Saint-Cloud gate and the adjacent bastions were seized by the soldiers, information respecting this being at once conveyed to their commander, General Douay.† At this time MacMahon was at

* From this gate an avenue leads to the Saint-Cloud bridge over the Seine.

† See p. 172, *ante*. The army was now really composed of six corps. The 1st, under Ladmirault, had borne the brunt of the fighting at Neuilly. The 2nd, under Cissey, had figured chiefly on the South of Paris. Each of these corps was composed of three divisions of infantry, a brigade of light cavalry, six batteries of artillery, and a body of engineers. The third corps, under Du Barail and at first composed chiefly of cavalry, now also included three divisions of infantry, with horse artillery. The men serving in the above commands largely belonged to the former armies of Metz and Sedan. The 4th Corps, commanded by Douay, had been got together at Cherbourg; and the 5th, under Clinchant, at Cambrai. Each was approximately of the same strength as the first three corps. Further, there was General Vinoy's force, formed of remnants of the former army of Paris; and a large reserve of artillery.

Mont Valérien, but directly he heard of what had happened he came down to the village of Boulogne, and established his headquarters there. The first division of Douay's army corps to enter Paris was Berthaut's, which by four o'clock in the afternoon was in possession of the Point-du-Jour. Verger's division followed at about half-past seven. Mac-Mahon, however, had already ordered other commanders, Ladmirault, Clinchant and Vinoy, to support Douay, and thus great bodies of men came down on this and adjacent points of Paris.

As I previously indicated, the bombardment in the early part of the afternoon had led many insurgents to desert their posts. Little groups of them were scattered among the houses of Auteuil and Passy. General Clinchant and others turned the position of La Muette, and carried it together with a part of Passy. Further, Divisional Generals Grenier and Laveaucoupet of the 1st (Ladmirault's) corps, crossed the Bois de Boulogne and entered the city by the Passy and Auteuil gates. Meantime Verger's division was being guided by Ducatel * in the direction of the Trocadero. On the way, a section of this division had to carry a barricade on the quays. Other men seized the church of Sainte-Périne and the Place d'Auteuil, where the Federals put up a very poor defence. Then, although the

* When the insurrection had been suppressed the Cross of the Legion of Honour was conferred on Ducatel, and Girardin of *La Liberté* and Villemessant of *Le Figaro* subsequently organized a public subscription which yielded him nearly £5000. There was even an attempt to bring him forward as a candidate for the Assembly, but this failed. In January 1872, however, Thiers appointed Ducatel to the tax-receivership at Melun. Unfortunately he discharged his functions by deputy, and a large sum of money having been stolen in 1877, he was then removed from his post. Personally he would seem to have been guilty of negligence only.

insurgents at the Trocadero ought to have realized how near to them the fighting was, and have prepared to defend their naturally strong position with the greatest energy, they allowed it to be rushed—taken by surprise. In Passy, Auteuil, and at the Trocadero the soldiers made some 1500 prisoners.

Meantime, Bruat's and Faron's divisions, belonging to Vinoy's corps, had entered Paris by way of the Point-du-Jour and Passy. The former had orders to cross the Seine by the viaduct, and effect an entry into the district of Grenelle, in order to lend a helping hand to General de Cissey's corps, which, on this side, was just outside the ramparts. Bruat's men encountered no little resistance in Grenelle, but they secured possession of a part of the district between midnight and one o'clock, just as one of Cissey's brigades forced the Porte de Sèvres and seized the Ceinture railway line. Whilst these events were happening on the south, a column of MacMahon's forces which went northward surprised the position of the Arc-de-Triomphe, where the Federals were in the very act of installing a fresh battery. The soldiers were not quite quick enough to seize it, the insurgents hastily retreating with their guns down the Avenue des Champs Élysées. At last the morning broke, and MacMahon came from Boulogne to the Trocadero, where he installed his headquarters.

The Commune meanwhile was issuing orders and drafting proclamations. When Delescluze heard of the entry of the troops and the loss of the Trocadero, he sent urgent instructions to the commander of the Communalist artillery at Montmartre. "The commander," he wrote, "is ordered to concentrate his fire on the Trocadero. It [the entry of the

troops] is only a surprise, which the people will easily overcome. But it is necessary to act without delay. Fire without a pause on the Trocadero." That same morning the official journal of the insurgents issued a proclamation, drafted during the night and signed by Delescluze and the members of the Committee of Public Safety—Arnaud, Billioray, Eudes, Gambon and Ranvier. Its principal passages were to this effect:

Enough militarism! No more staff-officers with uniforms braided with gold on every seam! Room for the people, the fighters, the men with bare arms! The hour for revolutionary war has struck. . . . To arms, citizens, to arms! It is a question of conquering or of falling into the pitiless hands of the reactionaries and clericalists of Versailles, those scoundrels who deliberately handed France over to the Prussians, and who will make us pay the price of their treason. If you desire that the generous blood which has flowed like water during the last six weeks should not remain unfruitful, if you desire to live free in a free and egalitarian France, if you desire that your children should be spared your woes and wretchedness, you will all rise like one man, and then, confronted by your formidable resistance, the enemy who flatters himself that he will again place you beneath the yoke, will retain nought but the shame of the useless crimes with which he has soiled himself during the past two months. Citizens your mandataries will fight and die with you if necessary. But, in the name of this glorious France, the mother of all popular revolutions, the abiding brazier of those principles of justice and solidarity which must and will become the laws of the world, march against the enemy! And may your revolutionary energy show them that it may be possible to sel Paris, but not to subdue or deliver it over. The Commune relies on you rely upon the Commune!

MacMahon had appointed General Douay's corps to seize the Palais de l'Industrie in the Champs Élysées, the Palais de l'Élysée and the Ministry o the Interior, close to the Élysée, on the Place Beauvau. From the sixth-floor balcony of the house in the Rue de Miromesnil where I was living with my father and my brother Arthur, one could see a part of the palace, notably the guard-house

at the corner of the Faubourg Saint-Honoré and the Avenue de Marigny. Awakened at a very early hour by the sounds of firing, we repaired to the balcony in question. We were the only tenants in the house, the Chateaubriand family, which had left Paris before the German siege, not having returned since then. The sixth-floor rooms were chiefly occupied by their servants, but the concierge of the house had a key which procured us admission to some *soubrette's* little chamber, whence we speedily reached the balcony. From that point of vantage, as from the gallery of a theatre, we looked down upon an episode in the great tragedy of war. I had brought a sketch-block with me, and resting it on the balcony railing, after taking a chair, I was able to make in all comfort a sketch of the defence of the Élysée guard-house, which the soldiers were attacking.*

The insurgents had made a belated attempt to erect a barricade of paving-stones, but it was a paltry affair, and did not give them much protection. For a time, however, the soldiers, who had come from the Champs Élysées by some turning leading into the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, were unable to get at the palace, for they first had to carry a mansion, belonging to one of the Rothschilds, where a considerable party of insurgents had, so to say, entrenched themselves. Moreover, all the movements of the military were very cautious. They glided along the house-fronts, took refuge in every recess, stole into houses and fired from garret-windows and roofs, seldom, during the whole of the street-fighting, carrying a barricade by direct assault. Thus the

* A reproduction of the engraving made from my sketch for the *Illustrated London News* is included among the illustrations to this volume.

operations were prolonged; but, on the other hand, the losses of the army were not nearly so great as they would otherwise have been.

There is another point which must be mentioned. The fraternization of soldiery and guards at the rising of March 18 was not forgotten; and orders had gone forth to keep the troops as far as possible from any such contact with the insurgents as might lead to weakness on the part of the former, and possibly to a repetition of what had happened at the outset of the insurrection.

At last, the Rothschild mansion having been rushed, the soldiers drew nearer to the Élysée and some sharp rifle practice ensued, the insurgents replying from behind their barricade, or from the terraced roof of the guard-house. Amidst all this, came two or three explosions. The Montmartre batteries, which Delescluze had ordered to fire on the Trocadero, were now bombarding us with shells, those in command having heard, possibly, that the regular army had advanced as far as the Élysée quarter. No account was taken of the fact that there were still insurgents there, and thus more than one of the defenders of the palace was killed by one or another projectile from Montmartre. The end of the affair came, I remember, very suddenly. The attention of the insurgents was still directed towards the lower part of the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, whence they were being attacked, when all at once a body of troops came stealthily but rapidly along the Avenue de Marigny. By this means the Communalists were taken in the rear and all chance of escape was cut off. A few men who tried to resist were at once shot down. The rest dropped their weapons and surrendered. The same kind of thing occurred

THE DEFENCE OF THE GUARDHOUSE OF THE ELYSÉE PALACE.

repeatedly during the street-fighting. The insurgents were outmanœuvred, outflanked; and even their biggest barricades, bristling with ordnance, were of no avail to them.

Paris had changed since 1848. Here and there, of course, as is the case even to-day, some narrow and more or less winding streets still remained, but the greater part of the city offered nothing like the same facilities for defence as had been the case in pre-Haussmannite days. Shrewd people had remarked more than once during the great changes effected under the Empire, that the alterations not only improved the appearance of Paris, but would also greatly reduce the chances of an insurrection should any street-fighting occur. By the manner, too, in which large barracks were erected on a number of points, the so-called Army of Paris was distributed in such a way as to prevent an insurrection from obtaining the mastery in any important district—it being of course assumed that the soldiers would obey orders and not fraternize with the malcontents as they did at the rising of March 18, 1871. At the outset of the Week of Bloodshed MacMahon's forces certainly did not hold any of the Parisian barracks; but the very disposition of the long straight streets favoured the more or less scientific strategy of trained troops to the detriment of the Communalists, who, for the most part, merely knew how to fight in a rough and ready fashion.

As soon as the Élysée Palace had been taken, a considerable body of infantry appeared in the lower part of the Rue de Miromesnil, where, grounding their arms, they waited for orders. They were well under control, and having, perhaps, as yet participated in no fighting, they looked fairly good-humoured.

My brother went to buy a quantity of cigarettes and little cigars, and distributed them among these men, by whom they were gladly accepted. If I remember rightly, a part of this very regiment afterwards figured in the advance on the church of Saint-Augustin and the Pépinière barracks. On the way there came some very fierce fighting in and near the Rue Roquépine, where a fairly large body of insurgents had installed themselves in the houses and the two churches—one of the latter being a French Lutheran and the other an English Nonconformist place of worship. Those positions had to be carried before the troops could cross the lower part of the Boulevard Malesherbes. My father and my brother Arthur witnessed the operations in that direction.

Before then, however, my father and I had strolled to the corner of the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, which had become strangely quiet now that the soldiers were in possession of the Élysée and the Ministry of the Interior. We were standing at the corner of the Faubourg and looking around us, when we saw a pair of the many closed window-shutters open slightly, as if somebody desired to peep out. The street was deserted, except that the dead bodies of sundry insurgents lay here and there, and that a few soldiers stood outside the palace guard-house. All at once, however, just as the shutters opened, as I have said, we saw a horseman—a gendarme with a despatch-bag slung beside him—galloping towards us from the direction of Saint-Philippe du Roule. As he drew nearer a gun-barrel gleamed between the slightly-opened shutters across the street, and when the gendarme passed them a shot suddenly rang out; he lurched, threw up his hands, and then lurching

yet again fell from his horse, either dead or dying.

In an instant some of the soldiers at the Élysée ran up. Two or three attended to the fallen man whilst others looked about them to ascertain whence the shot had come. The shutters, from behind which it had been fired, had been closed again, but there was still a little tell-tale smoke hanging in the warm May air, and designating at any rate the house, if not the exact window, whence the fatal bullet had taken flight. In a minute or two a dozen furious men had battered in the small door in one leaf of the *porte-cochère*, and rushed into the house. Five, perhaps ten, minutes elapsed; then, all at once, they reappeared, having with them a grey-haired dishevelled woman, whose scanty clothing was badly torn. They drove her before them, then caught hold of her again and pushed her against a wall, shouting imprecations as they did so. But she gave no sign of fear. She drew herself up, and answered tauntingly: "*C'est bien fait! c'est bien fait!* You killed my son this morning, and now I have killed one of you! *Tas de lâches!*" Then, as half-a-dozen gun-barrels were already levelled at her, she raised her arm, and again opened her mouth. But the cry of "Vive la Commune!" which she doubtless wished to utter expired in her throat. The levelled rifles were discharged, and she fell dead, face downward, upon the pavement. She was the only woman whom I actually saw shot in the streets; but, like my father and my brother, I saw many men summarily despatched in a very similar manner, particularly after the soldiers had become infuriated by the many deeds of incendiarism.

Whilst my father and my brother went off after

the soldiers who had gone in the direction of Saint-Augustin, I returned to our flat, wrote some "copy," and touched up my sketch of the defence of the Élysée. On going out again, about the middle of the day, I met Captain Bingham who told me that, wishing to forward an article to London, he had just been to the British Embassy, but had unfortunately missed a courier to whom Mr. Malet had confided some despatches. It would appear, from Malet's reminiscences, that this courier was a young Englishman of good family who, in some foolish manner, had compromised himself in the insurrection, and whom it was thought advisable to save by sending him off in the guise, so to say, of a Queen's Messenger.

However that may have been, Bingham was anxious to communicate with London, and, remembering my own copy and my sketch, I agreed to join him in an attempt to reach the Gare du Nord, where we might perhaps be able to induce some railway man to convey our correspondence to Saint-Denis and post it there. In order to avoid the fighting in the direction of Saint-Augustin, we went up the Rue de Miromesnil until we came to the Boulevard Haussmann, which we crossed at some risk, as sundry bullets flew about every now and then. However, we turned at last into the Rue de la Bienfaisance and then, I think, into the Rue du Rocher, finally reaching the Rue Saint-Lazare at the point where the Rue de Rome joins it. From that point we intended to go eastward, past La Trinité and Notre Dame de Lorette, until reaching the Rue de Lafayette. We could tell by the reports we heard that there was fighting northward, in the direction of Batignolles; but the Rue Saint-Lazare,

which stretched before us bright in the May sunshine, appeared to be altogether quiet and deserted.

We were, of course, near the Gare Saint-Lazare, which was not nearly so large then as it is to-day. Houses and shops occupied the site of the present Café Terminus, and were separated at times by some rather dingy little courts or passages which had no particularly good reputation. We went on, however, quite at our ease and still seeing nobody, until all at once a solitary pedestrian, a civilian like ourselves, appeared in sight, coming in our direction. Directly we met he inquired if he would have any difficulty in reaching the Rue de la Bienfaisance. In reply we described the conditions which prevailed there, warning our questioner of sundry points traversed occasionally by Communalist bullets coming from a northerly direction. He then told us that he had been unable to return home during the previous night, and was the more anxious to do so as his young wife was expecting the birth of a child, their first baby. Indeed, he had absented himself on the previous day in order to fetch his mother-in-law, but having heard that the troops had entered Paris, and fearing that there might consequently be some danger on the road, he had deemed it imprudent to bring the old lady with him. He was, he added, a plumber by trade, and had taken no part in the insurrection, although it had repeatedly been very difficult for him to avoid service in the National Guard, which he had quitted at the outset of the civil war.

He had just finished his explanations and was thanking us for what we had told him when, in swift succession, there came three reports, and a bullet struck the unfortunate fellow in the temple, whilst

another grazed Bingham's hat and a third lodged itself in the shutters of a shop outside which we were standing. Attracted by the sound of conversation in the street, the shopkeeper, a *charcutier*, had cautiously set his door ajar in order to listen to us. On hearing the shots, however, he was for closing the door again, but Bingham gave it a vigorous push with his elbow, after which we both stooped, picked up the prostrate plumber, and carried him into the shop, where the pork-butcher, in despite of his calling, was raising loud exclamations of horror and affright.*

Without heeding him we reached the yard of the house, where we deposited the unfortunate plumber on a mattress, which was lent by the concierge, an old veteran who at once informed us that he had been with MacMahon at the storming of the Malakoff. I must mention, however, that before we had actually passed through the shop, a few more bullets struck its shutters, in such wise that only Bingham's cool alacrity saved my life and his own, for had we lingered another minute outside we should certainly have been "potted." As for the plumber, there seemed to be little chance of saving him; nevertheless it was proposed to summon a doctor, who lived, we learnt, in the next house, and whom the old warrior of the Crimea offered to fetch. But no sooner had he opened the *porte-cochère* than he was fired at, and thereupon deemed it advisable to beat a retreat.

* Bingham gives some account of this adventure in his "Recollections of Paris," but makes a few mistakes, and omits some rather curious little details. He says, for instance, that we carried the plumber into the court-yard of the house by the *porte-cochère*, but that was closed. We entered by way of the pork-butcher's shop. Further, Bingham omits the subsequent episode of the doctor and his testy indignation.

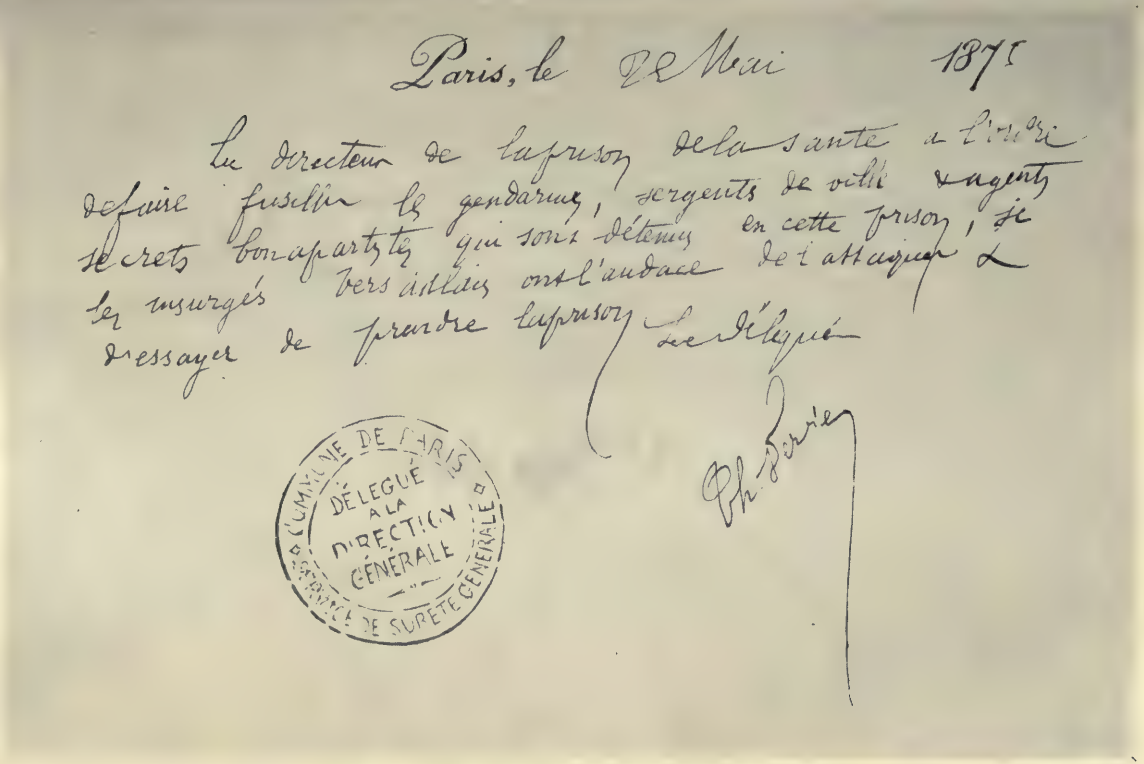
It must be explained that all the shots came from the Passage du Havre, where a party of insurgents had secreted themselves, whilst waiting for the advent of the troops, some of whom they probably hoped to pick off as they approached. That done, they doubtless proposed to escape by the entry of the passage in the Rue Caumartin. I knew the passage well, having often bought stationery there whilst I was a pupil at the adjoining Lycée Bonaparte, now Condorcet.

As it was impossible to fetch the doctor by way of the street, we thought of getting him down into the courtyard by means of a ladder, which first had to be hoisted on to the roof of a low stable, and then set against the medical gentleman's kitchen window. We began by parleying with his *cordon bleu*, and after some little trouble he condescended to come down the ladder, loudly grumbling the while at having to do so. He was, I may mention, an old man, garbed in a girdled dressing-gown and wearing a tasselled smoking-cap. Directly he had looked at the plumber, he became irate, complaining that we had exposed him to risk of accident for an absolutely hopeless case. The man's wound, said he, was a mortal one, and he would be quite dead in another quarter of an hour. The doctor was not mistaken. Nevertheless we felt we had done right in summoning him. I am glad to say that, by means of the ladder, he finally regained his flat without mishap.

Bingham, in relating the affair in his "Recollections," mentions that the courtyard of the house was a large one, so that we at least had ample room to stroll about whilst listening to the many shells which now frequently descended on the district from Montmartre. The detonations were not particularly

enlivening, and we could not forget the unfortunate plumber, for whilst we paced the yard we every now and then caught sight of his corpse, over which the concierge at last considerately threw a sheet. For the time, there could be no question of quitting our place of shelter. Rifle-firing became intermingled with the cannonade, everything indicating that some rather severe fighting was occurring in the vicinity. I should mention that whilst there was a pork-butcher's shop on one side of the *porte cochère* of the house where we had taken refuge, on the other there was a combined wine-shop and *bureau de tabac*. We therefore regaled ourselves with some claret and some cigars, and presently, feeling very hungry—I believe that neither of us had had any *déjeuner* that day—we procured some pork chops from the *charcutier* and arranged with the *marchand-de-vin* to cook them.

The meal was a welcome one, but still more welcome would have been the presence of the troops in the street outside. Bingham's hopes in that respect remained unfulfilled. Night came on, and still there was frequent firing, in such wise that we deemed it too risky to sally forth. Towards eleven o'clock, however, we noticed a lull in the neighbouring hostilities, and when it had lasted about half an hour we decided to make an attempt at escape. We realized that both Mrs. Bingham and my father must be alarmed at our prolonged absence, and might indulge in the worst surmises. So we prepared to depart, but we had only taken a few steps in the street when we were again fired at. Fortunately, the concierge was holding the door ajar, and we were able to regain our shelter-place unharmed.


Paris, le 22 Mai 1871

Le directeur de la prison de la santé a l'ordre
de faire fusiller les gendarmes, sergents de ville et agents
secrets bonapartistes qui sont détenus en cette prison, je
les insurgés versaillais ont l'audace de l'attaquer à
dressayer de prendre la prison. Le Délégué

Ch. Ferré

DÉLÉGUÉ A LA DIRECTION GÉNÉRALE

DÉLÉGATION DE LA COMMUNE DE PARIS

SURETÉ GÉNÉRALE

FERRÉ'S ORDER FOR SHOOTING THE POLICE HOSTAGES.

We then decided to spend the night on chairs in the wine-shop, but a person living in the house —a woman—offered to place some bedrooms at our disposal. One of them, said she, had belonged to her son, who, to avoid service in the National Guard, had taken refuge at Versailles. Dressed in black silk, white-haired, with side-curls, this person had the dignified bearing of an old marquise; but appearances are sometimes deceptive. At all events, I had no sooner taken possession of the bedroom assigned to me than I was struck by a number of photographs from the life which hung from the surrounding walls. I was only in my eighteenth year at that time, but no young fellow can grow up in such a city as Paris in complete ignorance of certain matters. Bingham's door having remained ajar, I went to speak to him on the subject. "Pay no attention," said he. "It completes the adventure. It is the same in here."

Neither of us could sleep much that night. At intervals a shot resounded, and once we heard a shriek. At about seven o'clock in the morning, however, Bingham, who had been peering through his window-shutters, called to me: "It is all right, Ernest! Here are the soldiers." I looked out, and saw as he did a body of artillery advancing along the Rue Saint-Lazare. We thereupon took leave of the inmates of the house, and went off, going homeward by much the same route as that which we had taken the previous day. From some papers found upon the dead plumber we had ascertained at what number he had lived in the Rue de la Bienfaisance, and Bingham desired to leave word there respecting his tragic fate. When we told the concierge, a woman, what had happened, she raised

her hands with a gesture of compassion, and exclaimed: "*Que c'est affreux! Le malheureux!* His poor wife gave birth to a child this very night!"

We went our way, but from time to time we once more had to run the gauntlet, for there were still little bodies of insurgents on the north, and bullets came whizzing down sundry side-streets, at the corners of which were groups of infantrymen who now and again returned the fire. Servant-girls, who were afraid to cross those dangerous points, threw money to the soldiers and begged them to buy a loaf at some neighbouring baker's and then to toss it to them. One girl confided a milk-jug to a linesman, who placed it on his bayonet, and by that means conveyed it to a comrade at the opposite corner. On its return journey, however, when it had been filled with the necessary milk for monsieur or madame's matutinal *café-au-lait*, the jug slipped and broke on the pavement, much to the amusement of the soldiers, but to the great distress of the girl who had brought it.

Just glancing at those incidents, we went on, taking the dangerous crossings at a run, and selecting preferentially some moment when we had just heard half a dozen reports, from which we concluded that those who had fired would be unable to do so again until they had reloaded their weapons. Finally, after making one or two short cuts, we reached the Rue de Miromesnil by way of the Rue de Penthièvre. As we turned the corner, Bingham looked up at the house where he and his wife were staying. She was leaning out of a window, but directly she saw him she fell back in a swoon. She had spent an anxious afternoon and a yet more terrible night. At one moment a shell from Montmartre had fallen on the

house where my father and I were living. It had done a great amount of damage to the servants' rooms on the topmost floor, and had carried away a part of the very balcony from which I had sketched the fighting at the Élysée. The pavement was littered with *débris*, but one block of masonry had been hurled across the street and through an open window into one of the Binghams' rooms, there breaking into fragments, and smashing various articles, greatly to Mrs. Bingham's alarm. That alone was enough to unnerve a woman, but afterwards had come the long and trying night with all its dreadful noises so suggestive of death and disaster. She wondered what had become of her husband, why he had not returned, and whether he had been killed in the street-fighting. About daybreak she went in sore distress to my father, who could do little to comfort her. He was feeling anxious about me, and was not even sure that Bingham and I were together. So the unhappy lady returned to her rooms, where her thoughts so worked upon her, that, as Bingham relates in his "Recollections," she at last felt minded to fling herself from her window. Fortunately she looked before she leapt, and at the critical moment her lost husband appeared in sight. He hastily rushed indoors to revive and comfort her.

In recalling that adventure I have often thought that it might never have occurred but for one circumstance. The plumber who accosted us had passed the Passage du Havre without being fired at. The attack, as one may call it, only came when he was conversing with us, and I verily believe that Bingham chiefly attracted the attention of the insurgents, for, according to his wont, he was wearing

a silk hat, which proclaimed him to be a *bourgeois*. The men who fired at us from the passage were undoubtedly waiting to pick off some soldiers, but, as none appeared in sight, it may well have occurred to them to relieve the monotony of their prolonged watch by shooting some member of the hated class which was known to have no sympathy with the Commune. Briefly, I fear it was Bingham's headgear which first suggested the mischief.

Naturally a variety of events were occurring whilst he and I were shut up in the house in the Rue Saint-Lazare. Louis Jezierski, who was then one of the best independent writers on military matters, relates in his little book "La Bataille des Sept Jours," that the insurgents flocked in great numbers into the central quarters of Paris in order to resist the advance of the troops there. Battalions marched along the principal boulevards headed by bands of music and dragging guns in their rear. There were a good many armed women among them. In fact, there was one small force composed entirely of women, wearing short skirts. Jezierski's criticism of these Amazons, whom he saw fighting, was that they were hardy and daring, but at the last moment they shrank from death.

The Rev. R. Ussher of Westbury, who had come into the city with Howard Russell, Lord Ronald Gower, and Mr. Trench of the British Legation at Brussels—they stayed at the Hôtel des Quatre Saisons—tells me that he was particularly struck by the awful expression which he noticed on the faces of the women of the Commune. It was, indeed, for the most part something unnatural, a compound of savagery, revengefulness, despair and ecstatic fervour. It was difficult to surmise, says

Mr. Ussher, what those women's previous callings had been. I agree with him, and many of the women themselves might have been at a loss to state their former avocations. They had forgotten them. These unfortunate creatures were the outcome of the Franco-German war, of the grim, dark, cold, hungry days of the first siege, of the cruel want, the enforced idleness, the continuous unrest of ten long woeful months. They had suffered more, often far more, than the men had suffered. Even during the Commune they had remained half-starved; they had lost husbands killed in the fighting, children who had wasted away in thousands; despair, rancour and hatred had mastered them; some had taken to drink, some, no doubt, had been women of evil lives, but others had once been happy wives and mothers, careful and painstaking *menagères*. Many of them were now sheer furies, but it was war, with all its horrors, its losses, its privations, its blood-thirstiness, which had made them such.

Whilst the western arrondissements of Paris were welcoming MacMahon's men, the insurgents, as I previously said, were preparing to defend the central districts. The *rappel* was being beaten on all sides, and barricades were being erected near the new Opera, the Bourse, and on other points, such as Notre Dame de Lorette, the Rue du Bac, and the vicinity of the Pantheon and the Luxembourg. So far as there was a general scheme, it appears to have been to defend a line running from Montmartre on the north to Montrouge on the south, by way of the Hôtel-de-Ville, which was the central position. West of that line, moreover, there were certain points where the troops might be held in check. MacMahon's advance was not quite as rapid as it

might have been, but he had to allow for the fatigue of his men, who had spent the whole of Sunday night under arms, mostly marching the while and often fighting. In that connection I may mention that it was subsequently considered prudent to suspend the advance directly night had fallen.

On the Monday, as we have seen, a part of Douay's corps took the Palais de l'Industrie and the Élysée, one of his divisions also seizing Saint-Augustin and the Pépinière barracks. In addition to the fighting in the Rue Roquépine there was a severe struggle for a barricade at the junction of the Rue d'Anjou and the Rue de Suresnes. The soldiers only carried it at last by passing through several houses and gardens. Northward, Clinchant's left, supported by Ladmirault's force, advanced to the Ternes, Bineau and Asnières gates in the ramparts, whilst his right took as its objectives the Parc Monceau, the Collège Chaptal, the Place de l'Europe and the Gare Saint-Lazare. According to Mac-Mahon's report all those points were occupied on Monday; but such was not the case, for my adventure with Bingham shows that the Gare Saint-Lazare was only reached by the troops at 7 o'clock on Tuesday morning, and that, northward, the insurgents were even then still in possession of positions which Clinchant should have previously carried. Had the contrary been the case there would have been no insurgent bullets whistling down the Rue de Rome and across the Rue du Rocher and other streets. I admit, however, that the operations on the north side of Paris were greatly accelerated during Tuesday, as I shall presently show.

On Monday, on the south side of the city, the

divisions led by Bruat and Susbielle, under Cissey, captured the various barricades at Grenelle, and going thence towards the Champ de Mars seized both the École Militaire and the Dupleix barracks. At the Military school Susbielle found 200 cannon and great stores of ammunition and food. Meantime, General de Lacretelle (a kinsman of Mrs. Bingham's) had successfully attacked the loopholed Jesuit College and some strong barricades in its vicinity, going as far east as the Place de Breteuil; whilst Bruat's men, following the quays, occupied in turn the Ministry of Foreign affairs and the Palais-Bourbon. When, however, MacMahon's report says that General Lion's brigade, after following the Rue de Vaugirard, took possession of the Gare Montparnasse that same Monday, it falls into a glaring error. The station in question was very stoutly defended by the insurgents, among whom a woman figured prominently; and according to Mme Larousse, the wife of the famous encyclopedist, who lived in the immediate vicinity, the station was not actually taken by the soldiers until Wednesday, May 24. That coincides with my own recollection of the fighting and the conflagrations at the Croix Rouge, near the Rue de Rennes, conducting to the Gare Montparnasse.

On Tuesday, while I was passing with my father along the Boulevard Malesherbes, where some of the fighting for the possession of Saint-Augustin had taken place, I noticed that the corpses of several insurgents were lying here and there on the pavement, and that in most instances their caps had been placed, or their *vareuses* turned back, over their faces. The weather was again as fine as on Monday, and now that the army occupied the district the window shutters of the houses had been opened, and

people were strolling hither and thither. Among them were sundry well-dressed women, who, in order to protect their complexions from the bright sunshine, had provided themselves with parasols. Never did I feel more disgusted than when I saw some of these creatures approach the corpses which were lying about, and with the tips of their parasols deliberately remove the caps or clothing placed over the faces of the dead. It was done simply to satisfy an idle and horrid curiosity as to what the man might be like. I was well pleased when a sergeant stepped out of a little group of soldiers, and, approaching one of these women, said to her: "Madame, death should be respected." As she turned away, feeling, I trust, heartily ashamed of herself—gay Parisienne though she probably was—the sergeant stooped down and re-covered the dead man's face. At that hour there were no conflagrations and nothing was known respecting the Commune's hostages. Thus, the intense bitterness which marked the final days of the struggle had not yet entered into it.

We obtained, I remember, a copy of Félix Pyat's paper *Le Vengeur*, which had appeared the previous day (Monday), and found in it a manifesto announcing that on Sunday night the enemy had effected an entry by treachery, and was bent on bringing back the infamous monarchy with a whole *cortège* of hideous iniquities. But, added Pyat, the population of Paris was rising, and the enemy's own men were deserting and joining the cause of the people. On the same day Lissagaray issued an appeal in his organ *Le Tribun du Peuple*, calling upon everybody to make a supreme effort, to forget all mistakes and dissensions, and to remember but one thing, that if the people should now succumb, the Empire would

be restored. Further, *Le Salut Public* printed an effusion in which the veracious Gustave Maroteau declared that the enemy was murdering the wives and children of the Parisians.

On Tuesday, the 23rd, whilst the soldiers on the south side were prosecuting their advance in the direction of the Observatory, those on the north were going towards Montmartre. After Ladmirault and Clinchant had carried the Parc Monceau neighbourhood, they reached Batignolles through the cemetery, turned and carried the insurgents' barricades on the Place Moncey and below the Rue Lepic, fought something like a real engagement in the Avenue Trudaine, took the Montmartre town-hall, and finally silenced the batteries of the Butte, the insurgents retreating doggedly towards Belleville and the Buttes Chaumont. The loss of Montmartre was, without a doubt, a severe blow for the Commune, which realized that it was now in serious jeopardy. Some of its principal men had scarcely waited, however, for this to happen in order to adopt extreme measures. Already on Monday, Théôphile Ferré, who on May 13 had replaced Cournet as Délegué à la Sûreté, sent an order to the director of the prison of La Santé telling him that he was to shoot the gendarmes, policemen and secret Bonapartist agents detained there if the Versaillese insurgents should have the audacity to attack him and attempt to take the prison.* On the 23rd Delescluze and Billioray (of the Committee of Public Safety) signed an order running : "Citizen Raoul Rigault is charged, in conjunction with Citizen Regère, with the execution

* I assume that the date of this order was May 22. It will be observed, however, that in the copy of it given in this volume, the figures have a peculiar and uncertain form.

of the Commune's decree respecting the hostages." On the other hand, the date is missing from the fragments of an order which Rigault issued for the execution of the Archbishop of Paris and other hostages, and the burning of the Tuileries and the Palais Royal. I shall have occasion to refer to these instructions again.

With respect to the conflagrations generally, there was an order issued at noon on the 23rd and signed by Delescluze, Regère, Ranvier, Johannard, Vésinier, Brunel and Dombrowski. It instructed citizen Millière to take 150 fuséens, and set fire to all suspicious houses and public buildings on the left (*i.e.* south) side of the Seine; Citizen Dereure to take similar steps in the first and second (Louvre and Bourse) arrondissements; Citizen Billioray to act likewise, with 100 men, in the ninth, tenth and twentieth arrondissements; * and Citizen Vésinier (with 50 men) to deal with the main Boulevards from the Madeleine to the Bastille. In all cases, however, they were, in the first instance, to come to an understanding with the commanders of the barricades.

Ferré, who, as we have seen, issued on the 22nd an order for the execution of the gendarmes, etc. (that order bearing the Public Safety stamp), drew up a different one at the Ministry of War on the following day. Produced when Ferré was subsequently court-martialled, it was found to be written on official paper, with the heading *Ministère de*

* Ninth arrondissement: Quartier Saint-Georges, Chaussée d'Antin, Faubourg Montmartre, Quartier Rochechouart. Tenth Arrondissement: Enclos Saint-Laurent, Porte Saint-Denis, Porte Saint-Martin, Hôpital Saint-Louis. Twentieth arrondissement: Ménilmontant, Belleville, Père-Lachaise, etc.

la Guerre. Cabinet du Ministre; and it ran as follows:—

Au Citoyen Lucas.

Faites de suite flamber Finances et venez nous retrouver. 4 Prairial, an 79.*

Th. Ferré.

The very first conflagrations were those ignited in the Rue Royale at the corner of the Faubourg Saint Honoré, and they were undoubtedly designed for the purpose of checking the advance of the soldiers either by way of the Boulevards or the Rue Saint-Honoré. It was at about four o'clock on Tuesday, May 23, when some flames suddenly leapt out of the corner-house where Aurelly's *magasin-de-modes* was located. The next house, where there was either a book-shop or a publisher's store-place on the ground floor, was also soon in flames, which before long spread to the old English restaurant known as "His Lordship's Larder" and mentioned by me in the previous volume of my reminiscences. Weber, the landlord, and his family had taken refuge in the cellars, and there they perished from suffocation. Several people also lost their lives in ten other houses which were destroyed by fire on this point, some of them being in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, whilst others stretched towards the Madeleine. Yet another house was gutted on the other side of the Rue Royale, at the corner of the Rue Saint Honoré. Mme. Decamps, widow of the famous French painter of that name, resided there, and a fine collection of her husband's works was destroyed by the flames.

* "Have [Ministry of] Finances set on fire at once, and come and join us." In the Revolutionary Calendar, May 20 became the first day of Prairial.

At about the same hour, or perhaps a little later, Ferré's instructions concerning the Ministry of Finances were carried into effect. From evidence given at subsequent court-martials it appears that all necessary preparations for burning down the ministry had been made already on Monday, and that on Tuesday only a formal order was being awaited to carry out the plans agreed upon. When it arrived fire was set to the building in three or four places. At first the pile burnt very slowly, by reason perhaps of the tons of documents which it contained, and smoke rather than flames arose from it. Late that same Tuesday night, however, the sky spreading over Paris became lurid with other conflagrations. North of the Seine, the Tuileries, the Louvre Library and the Palais Royal were all ablaze. On the south side, the Palace of the Legion of Honour, the Palace of the Council of State, the Court of Accounts, and the Orsay barracks were also on fire. Those who stood on the Pont de la Concorde, which the troops were guarding, could see great tongues of flame shooting up from eight or nine fine edifices, between which the Seine was flowing like a river of molten gold.

I shall speak of those terrific scenes and others in more detail in my next chapter. Here I will only add a few lines respecting the general character of the incendiarism. It was for the most part planned deliberately. It was the Commune's answer to Thiers, MacMahon and the Assembly. The Commune's original threat of it had been regarded by Thiers as mere boastfulness. Now he was to realize his great mistake.

I have quoted orders showing that the incendiarism was deliberate, and before I have finished

I shall be able to adduce several others to the same effect. Some of the final conflagrations may have been due to a sudden impulse on the part of some body of National Guards. But the earlier and the principal ones were expressly ordered by the Commune itself, by its Committee of Public Safety, or by its special delegates. In the main, the work was done by men—members of the National Guard. It cannot be said that no women took part in it. I know that Louise Michel gloried, at her trial, in having had a share in the work of destruction. But, in most instances, the women who helped to set fire to the public buildings of Paris did so acting under the direct instructions of men. Here and there some crazy creature may have tried, on her own initiative, to set one or another house on fire with the help of a canful of petroleum. But the tales of hundreds of women wandering about with their little supplies of mineral oil, and setting fire to one and another place in a haphazard way, are gross exaggerations, and in many instances absolutely untrue. The idea of the wandering *pétroleuse* appealed, however, to imaginative journalists, and a whole crop of legends sprang up with respect to her.

The day which witnessed the first conflagrations in Paris was also marked by the first "execution" of hostages, for the bandit Raoul Rigault ordered the governor of Sainte-Pélagie to shoot that unfortunate journalist Gustave Chaudey and three gendarmes who were in the same prison. Thus the sceptical Thiers received a first answer with respect to the hostages also.

XI

THE WEEK OF BLOODSHED (II)

Further Positions seized on May 23—The Conflagration at the Tuileries—The Palais Royal—Fires on the South Side of Paris—Burning of the Hôtel-de-Ville—Theatres in Flames—Damage by Artillery Fire—Incendiarism by Order—The Commune's last Appeals—Advance of the Troops on May 24—The Fall of the Ministry of Finances—The Fire at the Palais-de-Justice—The Grenier d'Abondance and my Father's Adventurous Journey—Corpses in Layers!—Military Operations on May 25—More Conflagrations—Fighting on May 26—Capture of the Buttes Chaumont and Père-Lachaise Cemetery on May 27—Last Hostilities on May 28—Losses on both sides—The Hostages—More about Chaudey—Assassination of the Archbishop and Others—Jecker is shot—The Massacre in the Rue Haxo—Fate of Mgrs. Surat and Bayle—The Last Hostages at La Roquette delivered—The Christian Brothers at Mazas—The Murder of the Dominicans—Lying-in-State and Obsequies of the Archbishop and Others—MacMahon's Proclamation to the Parisians—Executions of Prisoners.

I ought to have mentioned in my last chapter that on Tuesday, May 23, after the capture of Montmartre, where the troops found a hundred pieces of artillery and large stores of ammunition, Clinchant's force came southward, securing in turn the positions of the Collège Rollin, the Place Saint-Georges (the site of Thiers's demolished house) and the church of Notre Dame de Lorette. Douay's men also advanced to the last-named point, seized the crossway of the Faubourg Montmartre and the Rue Lafayette, then came down to the Boulevards by the Rue Drouot, and, going westward afterwards, took the barricade near the new Opera-house in the rear. I witnessed a part of that operation, and was struck by the

brutality which some army officers evinced towards captive insurgents. As it happened, the anger of the troops was now rising, owing largely to the incendiarism in the Rue Royale and the difficulty which had been experienced in seizing the position of the Madeleine that same day.

On the south side of Paris,* the soldiers going towards the Observatory occupied the Montparnasse cemetery, the Place d'Enfer and the horse-market, capturing various barricades during their advance. Meantime, Lacretelle's force was bearing down on the Rue de Babylone, the Abbaye, and the crossway of the Croix Rouge, on which last point there was very severe fighting, the progress of the troops being hampered by many acts of incendiarism. Indeed, the crossway became one great blaze of fire —several houses, including a large drapery establishment called the Grands Magasins du Cherche-Midi, being entirely destroyed. Several people lost their lives in these huge braziers. It was past midnight when the troops eventually gained the mastery, the Croix-Rouge being one of the few points on which hostilities did not cease after darkness had fallen. However, other columns had previously pushed on towards the Luxembourg, after Bruat's marine infantry had taken possession of the War Ministry and the strongly barricaded and fiercely burning Rue du Bac, where there was one of the most desperate struggles of the whole week.

I have spoken of darkness, but, truth to tell,

* In this direction a colonel of the loyal National Guards, a wine merchant named Durouchoux, made a vigorous effort to support the troops with some hastily collected men of the 15th, 16th, 17th and 106th battalions. He was shot down, however, whilst leading them against the insurgents.

that night there was comparatively little, for the numerous conflagrations illumined many a street and square. In a previous book of mine,* I gave a detailed account of the destruction of the famous palace which was the residence of so many French sovereigns. Here I will describe its fate rather more briefly. I must mention in the first instance that whilst the Communalists were endeavouring to check the army's advance towards the palace, a very strange thing occurred, that is to say, a number of furniture-vans coming direct from the Garde Meuble, or State Furniture Depository, were driven into the Cour du Carrousel. They contained all the works of art, books, and other valuable things removed from Thiers's house; and their arrival at the Tuileries was attended also by that of a number of barrels of gunpowder. Somewhat later, the notorious General Bergeret came from the Hôtel-de-Ville (where he had received positive orders to set the palace on fire) and distributed the work of destruction among three or four subordinates. They included a certain Dardelle, who had belonged to the Chasseurs d'Afrique, and who held the office of Military Governor of the Tuileries. With him was a man named Victor Bénot, who had served in the 10th regiment of the Line, and had afterwards become a lieutenant in the National Guard, and a bibulous Captain Boudin, who had found the Tuileries cellars much to his liking.

Bergeret instructed Dardelle to remove all the military *matériel* which the Commune might still need, whilst Bénot and Boudin were to set the palace on fire. They did so right willingly. Not only had gunpowder been brought to the palace, but

* "The Court of the Tuileries, 1852–1870." Chatto & Windus.

THE HÔTEL-DE-VILLE AFTER THE CONFLAGRATION.

there was also some liquid tar and some turpentine, which Boudin, taking the initiative, employed to set the Pavillon Marsan (at the Rue de Rivoli end of the palace) on fire. With the help of the many pails and brooms found in the servants' quarters, the hangings, floorings, doors, and furniture of several rooms were coated with tar or drenched with petroleum and turpentine. Bénot meanwhile placed several barrels of gunpowder in the chief vestibule, and others, together with several cases of cartridges, in the famous Salle des Maréchaux, the scene of so many historic fêtes. Trains of powder were also laid, including one which extended to the Place du Carrousel. All was ready by ten o'clock at night. Insurgents were still defending the Tuileries garden, a barricade near its ditch, and the quay alongside the Seine. Others, moreover, were still stationed at the Ministry of Finances, although that edifice was already burning; it being their object to keep the soldiers in check until the conflagration of the Tuileries should be irremediable. As for Bergeret and his staff-officers, they retired to the Louvre barracks, where, shortly after 10 p.m., they were joined by Bénot, who had previously fired one or two trains of gunpowder.

The whole company sat down to supper, ate and drank copiously, and after partaking of *café noir* at the conclusion of their repast, went out on to the Louvre terrace in order to feast their eyes on the spectacle of the blazing palace. The flames seemed to travel from either end of the great façade—over 1200 feet in length—towards the central cupola-crowned pavilion where Bénot, with artistic feeling, had designedly placed most of his explosives and combustibles. At about 2 o'clock in the morning

there came a terrific thunderous shock and uproar, and the whole of the surrounding district trembled. Flames now leapt skyward from the central pavilion of the palace, whose cupola was tossed into the air, whence it fell in blazing fragments, whilst a myriad of sparks rose, rained, or rushed hither and thither, imparting to the awful spectacle much the aspect of a "bouquet" of fireworks.*

Taking a pencil, Bergeret wrote on a slip of paper: "The last vestiges of Royalty have just disappeared. I wish that the same may befall all the public buildings of Paris." He handed this note to a young insurgent named Victor Thomas—curiously enough a nephew of General Clément Thomas—and it was taken to the Committee of Public Safety, which was still installed at the Hôtel-de-Ville. Bénot, who had been the principal artisan of the destruction of the Tuileries, was not content with that exploit, for he also helped to set fire to the Louvre library, which comprised over 40,000 volumes, including some very valuable and splendidly bound works.

Many similar deeds ensued. Already at one o'clock on the morning of May 22, Boursier, who commanded at the Palais Royal, received orders from Eudes to set the former residence of Prince Napoleon Jerome on fire. He refrained from doing so, however; but on the night of the 23rd a certain "Staff Colonel" Isnard carried out the instructions. Although the garden galleries escaped, the palace itself was gutted in spite of the many efforts which were made on the following day to check the eager march of the flames. The Théâtre Français, destroyed by fire many years afterwards, escaped on

* The fire did not die out until the evening of the third day.

The Tuileries. *The Cour des Comptes.*

PARIS IN FLAMES.

this occasion, thanks to the energy of some of the inhabitants of the district.

The palaces on the south bank of the Seine—the Exchequer Court, the Council of State, and the Legion of Honour—the mansions of the Marquis de Villeneuve-Bargemont, the Comte de Chabrol, M. de Pomereu, M. Gatteaux the sculptor, and others in the Rue de Lille, together with the Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations, appear to have been set on fire by the order of Eudes. M. de Chabrol's concierge was shot dead for attempting to resist the incendiaries. At M. Gatteaux's house many precious antiques in bronze and marble, and a fine library of books, were entirely destroyed. In the same direction several of the houses in the Rue du Bac were committed to the flames, but the two well-known drapery stores there, the original Bon Marché and the Petit Saint Thomas, escaped destruction.

On the northern side of the Seine and still on Wednesday, May 24, Colonel Pindy, who commanded at the Hôtel-de-Ville, set that historic pile on fire. In its immediate vicinity several houses of the Avenue Victoria and the Quai de Gesvres were fired by the insurgents. One of the former was a store-place for old municipal records, and before the war I had there been privileged to make a tracing of the entry recording the death and burial of "Marchialy," otherwise Matthioli, the reputed "Man with the Iron Mask." The register containing that entry was, like many others, destroyed by the Communalist conflagration, but my tracing was reproduced as frontispiece to an English version of Marius Topin's work on the "Iron Mask" mystery.*

Further, on that same May 24, there was an

* Edited by my father and published by Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co.

attempt to burn down the Cathedral of Notre Dame,* and numerous houses were set on fire in the Rue de Rivoli, at the corners of the Rue Saint-Denis, the Boulevard Sébastopol, the Rue du Temple, and elsewhere. Forty miscreants also burst into the Théâtre Lyrique and destroyed it by fire. They were less successful at the Théâtre du Châtelet, although considerable damage was done there. On the Boulevards, the Porte Saint-Martin theatre was burnt to the ground, after Gœtchy, the lessee and manager, had been threatened with instant death if he should presume to offer any opposition. Yet another theatre, the little Délassements Comiques, was also deliberately set on fire.

On the other hand, it cannot be denied that in a few instances conflagrations may have been ignited fortuitously by the artillery fire *on both sides.* Several buildings were certainly damaged more or less severely by shells, for instance the new Opera-house, some churches, such as La Trinité, Saint-Eustache, and the Madeleine, the Louvre (where a shell burst into the Galérie d'Apollon), the Porte Saint-Denis and numerous houses in the Rue Saint-Antoine, the Rue de Turbigo, and the Boulevard Beaumarchais. But, as I said once before, most of the fires were due to deliberate incendiarism under positive instructions emanating from responsible leaders or officials of the insurrection. A certain Lieut.-Colonel Parent, an acolyte of Pindy, the commander at the Hôtel-de-Ville, issued an order running: "Set fire to the district of the Bourse, fear nothing." Brunel sent out instructions for the delivery of petroleum on certain points. At 9 p.m. on May 24 a general order came from the War Commission (headed by

* See page 231, *ante.*

Delescluze) saying: "Destroy all houses from which the National Guards may have been fired on, and execute all who reside in them unless they themselves give up or execute the perpetrators of these acts." Again, when Delescluze's residence was searched, another order signed by him and Billioray, and countersigned by a certain Colonel Lambron, was found there. It was addressed to Dombrowski and dated Sunday, May 21, but had never been forwarded.* The text was as follows: "Blow up or set fire to the houses which may interfere with your system of defence. The barricades should not be liable to attack from the houses."

It was on the morning of the 24th that the last number of the Commune's *Journal Officiel* appeared. It contained an "Appeal of the People of Paris to the Soldiers of Versailles," exhorting the latter to quit the service of the aristocrats and to follow the example of their comrades at the rising of March 18, assuring them that if they would but do so they would be received joyfully, like brothers. One Proclamation, emanating from the Central Committee of the National Guard, took the cry: "Aux armes, citoyens!" as its text; another, addressed to the soldiers, told them that: "When an infamous order is given, disobedience becomes a duty."

But the men of the army of Versailles were in no mood to join the Communalists. In the course of May 24 General de Cissey's corps pressed on to the Luxembourg palace, in the vicinity of which some

* Chosen to defend Montmartre, Dombrowski was shot in the abdomen whilst crossing the Rue Myrrha on May 23. He died three hours later —not, as some say, at the Hôtel-de-Ville, but—at Lariboisière hospital, and was afterwards buried at Père-Lachaise.

very destructive explosions occurred. Strong barricades were taken after savage fighting in the Rue Soufflot. The Pantheon, the Val-de-Grâce military hospital, and the Place Maubert fell, in turn, into the power of the troops. Meantime, in central Paris, Douay's corps reached the Place Vendôme, the Palais Royal, the Tuileries, and the Bourse, and after taking a huge barricade at the Porte Saint-Denis pressed on as far as the Boulevard de Strasbourg. Northward, the Church of Saint Vincent de Paul and, later, the Gare du Nord were captured. On the evening of that day the troops held more than half of Paris. Montmartre was bombarding the insurgents on the Buttes Chaumont, and Mac-Mahon had his headquarters at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the Quai d'Orsay.

Of my personal experiences that day I will mention two instances. I was with my father and my brother at the Croix Rouge conflagration, where for a while we were enveloped by flames and smoke; and, later, on the Place de la Concorde, when the whole front of the arcaded Ministry of Finances fell forward into the Rue de Rivoli. At that moment my father and my brother were actually in front of the ministry, and had to run in desperate haste in order to escape being crushed to death by some of the descending masonry. It came down with a loud crash, and immediately afterwards the atmosphere was darkened by an immense cloud of smoke, in the midst of which were thousands of more or less charred papers, some of which the breeze carried as far as the Place des Invalides, whilst others rained down upon the Place de la Concorde and the Tuileries gardens. We picked up a few of those papers, and among them, I remember,

was a petition addressed in 1814 to Louis XVIII, by some nobleman who had returned from exile, and who begged the king either to restore to him his ancestral estates, confiscated during the Revolution, or to grant him a suitable indemnity.*

On the morrow, Thursday, May 25, we were at the conflagrations of the Prefecture of Police and the Palais de Justice. If I remember rightly, these buildings had been set on fire the previous day. In any case the order for their destruction had come from Raoul Rigault. At the Palais de Justice we were called upon to assist in pumping and passing buckets of water. I believe I am correct in saying that the Paris fire-brigade did not possess at that time more than two or three steam-engines. The brigade, moreover, had been thoroughly disorganized by the Communalists, and if firemen had not flocked in from the suburbs, and hastened to Paris from the provinces, the destruction in the city would have been much greater than it was. For the most part, however, only manual engines were available, and the men who were told off to work them had to exert themselves like Trojans. I gave, I know, some hours to pumping and passing buckets at the Palais de Justice, where the Salle des Pas Perdus was badly damaged, while the Assize and Cassation Courts were gutted ; † and when, later in the day, I chanced to be on the Boulevards and was called upon to do similar duty at a fire in the Rue Duphot,

* The documents in question passed into my father's possession. I do not know, however, what ultimately became of them. The State Pension Ledger was destroyed in the fire at the Ministry ; as well as a copy of the Great Ledger of France. Fortunately two other copies of the latter were in existence.

† The historic Sainte-Chapelle, though repeatedly in imminent peril, remained, fortunately, uninjured.

I excused myself by asserting that I was out and about on some official duty. A corporal of the Line refused to believe me, and even lunged at me with his bayonet which, fortunately, only passed through my coat.

Whilst that was happening, although my father and my brother had once or twice been arrested as suspects, and at moments consigned to guard-houses, they prevailed on a venturesome cabman to drive them to the east of Paris where another great conflagration was in full force. This was at the Grenier d'Abondance or Reserve Granary, on the Boulevard Bourdon, a huge establishment, which contained large stores of grain, oil, wine, spirits and dry cod, and which was set on fire by a certain Ulric, commander of the 13th Legion of the National Guard.* The conflagration lasted during two full days, and a terrible stench (due to the burning oil and codfish) infected the whole neighbourhood. The somewhat adventurous journey undertaken by my father and my brother was marked by some curious incidents. More than once people ran out of houses and hailed them, imagining that they must be doctors. At another time they were challenged by a man of the naval brigade, who questioned them closely before allowing them to proceed, and was only satisfied when, knowing something of London himself, they proved that they were Englishmen (and not runaway Communards) by giving proper answers to his inquiries respecting certain parts of our metropolis. During the drive, my brother was particularly struck by the large number of dead insurgents whom he saw lying about the quays.

* There is a despatch of his, saying: "I have set fire to the Grenier d'Abondance. Our artillery magnificent. Good resistance.—C. ULRIC."

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE MINISTRY OF FINANCES, RUE DE RIVOLI.

At one point the bodies had been collected together and piled in layers one atop of another. In connection with the slaughter, MacMahon subsequently admitted that quite 15,000 insurgents were shot dead during that Bloody Week, and, in General Appert's opinion, the number was even greater. Whatever may be said against the Communalists, the great majority of them at least fought with desperate courage.

On the day I have now reached, May 25, the army's principal effort on the north-east of Paris was to drive the insurgents back on Ménilmontant and Belleville, whilst on the south the forts of Montrouge and Bicêtre and the Hautes-Bruyères redoubt were taken. There was also some severe fighting on and near the Place d'Italie. In the evening, however, hostilities ceased on the south side, all that part of the city and all the bridges crossing the Seine being in the possession of General de Cissey's Army Corps. In the east-central districts, the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers, the Rue Montorgueil, the Saint-Martin market and the École Turgot were taken. Later, the Place du Château d'Eau was occupied, together with the Théâtre Déjazet, and the advance was carried as far as the Boulevard du Temple. In a more northerly direction, the Boulevard Magenta and the district round the church of Saint-Laurent were occupied, and Ladmirault held the chief points near the Canal Saint-Martin with the view of proceeding towards the Buttes Chaumont.

The great lurid clouds which hung over Paris that night were not merely formed of smoke. A change in the weather was impending, and on the morning of Friday, the 26th, fine but persistent rain

began to fall upon the smouldering city. We now heard of yet other conflagrations. The Docks de la Villette were burning, and so was the Entrepôt des Denrées Coloniales near the Saint-Martin Canal. Here and there, moreover, various district town-halls and private houses had been set on fire. A part of the Gobelins tapestry-works had been destroyed. The drapery-store called the Tapis Rouge in the Faubourg Saint-Martin had met with a similar fate; and the army had reached the Théâtre de Cluny only just in time to prevent it from being blown up, for it was full of gunpowder and petroleum.

The troops were now intent on seizing the Place de la Bastille, which was too strongly fortified to allow of any frontal attack. It was therefore turned by way of Bercy and Bel-Air, whereupon the insurgents retreated towards the Place du Trône. The soldiers pursued them in that direction by various routes, but failed, for the time, to carry the position, and had to bivouac in adjacent streets. In an advance on the Boulevard Richard-Lenoir, General Leroy de Dais was mortally wounded. Meantime, however, Ladmirault was going steadily towards the Buttes Chaumont by way of the Rue Riquet, the Rue de Flandre, and the Rue de Kabylie. One of his brigadiers occupied the line of the Ourcq Canal, and after taking several bastions of the eastern ramparts reached the great slaughter-houses of Paris.

On Saturday, the 27th, the bulk of the remaining insurgents occupied the Buttes Chaumont and the heights of Père-Lachaise cemetery, which were still being cannonaded from Montmartre. At 6.30 a.m., one of Ladmirault's columns crossed the Ourcq Canal, seized the Cattle-Market, and then the Pantin

gate in the ramparts. Batteries were planted in front of the market to reply to the incessant fusillade which came from the houses and gardens of Belleville. At first the advance of the soldiers was slow, but presently the Carrières d'Amérique and the Buttes Chaumont were carried at a charge—the latter by the men of the Foreign Legion, who raised the tricolour on the summit of the heights. Numerous guns and much ammunition were found there. At last, after experiencing a vigorous resistance at a barricade, the 1st Infantry effected a lodgment in Père-Lachaise cemetery. Once again the soldiers encountered a desperate defence, but were reinforced, and the cemetery fell into their hands.* The Communalists, however, still held the Place Voltaire below Père-Lachaise, and had strongly fortified it, but it was bombarded from the Place du Trône and eventually carried. It was at this time that Delescluze was shot on a barricade.† Little or no chance of escape now seemed to exist for the remaining Federals; for columns of troops, following the military boulevards on the east, were occupying the last bastions and gates of the

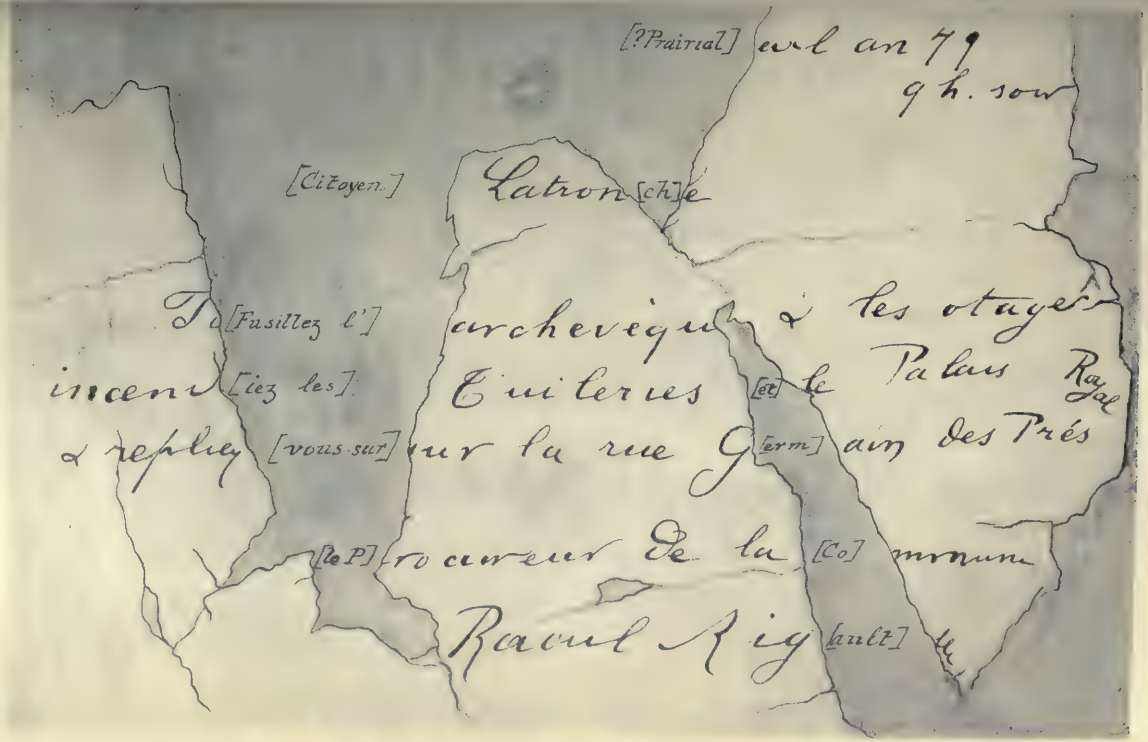
* By the order, it is said, of General de Galliffet, a considerable number of insurgents were shot in the cemetery after they had surrendered. MacMahon subsequently stated that he had given orders that no insurgent, who surrendered and gave up his arms, should be shot, but that in some regrettable instances his instructions were not carried into effect. It is certain that several unarmed prisoners were at once despatched. I saw some instances of the kind near the Palais Royal. Further, several men were shot owing to the fact that they were mistaken for others. A man named Constant met with that fate because he was supposed to be Billioray. Another, shot outside Saint-German-l'Auxerrois, was wrongly declared to be Jules Vallès. A third, likewise summarily executed, was said to be Édouard Vaillant, who is still alive. Further, neither Millière, shot on the steps of the Pantheon, nor Tony Moilin, shot at the Luxembourg, ought to have been put to death without trial.

† See p. 105, *ante*.

ramparts, and co-operating in the task of completely surrounding those insurgents, who, in a frenzy of despair, were fighting on, even to the death.

Sunday came, Whit-Sunday, May 28, and witnessed the end of the hostilities. Vinoy's and Ladmirault's men, starting at four o'clock in the morning, completed the task of investing the few remaining positions of the insurgents, whilst Douay and Clinchant kept a vigorous watch in order to prevent the Guards from breaking through the cordon and descending once more into central Paris. Whilst one of Vinoy's brigades occupied the Place de Puébla, another carried a great barricade in the Rue Haxo near the Romainville gate. Two thousand prisoners and a quantity of artillery were then captured. Already at 5 a.m. another column, under General de Langourian, had surrounded the prison of La Roquette, and delivered 189 hostages detained there. Unhappily a number had been put to death two days previously. From La Roquette Langourian's men descended to the church of Saint-Ambroise, cut the wires by which the gunpowder stored there was to have been exploded, and joined Douay's force on the Boulevard Richard-Lenoir.

Meantime Ladmirault captured the very last bastions of the ramparts, and then, going westward, drove detachments of insurgents out of the Prés Saint-Gervais, took Belleville church, and carried the barricades in the upper part of the Rue de Paris. Here more guns and more prisoners fell into the hands of the troops. Next came the occupation of the Hôpital Saint-Louis, and afterwards the final operation, the capture of a big barricade atop of the Faubourg du Temple. The fighting which had begun with the entry of the troops at about 4 o'clock


[?Prairial] eul an 79
9 h. sor
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T a [Fusillez l'] archeveque & les otages
incend [iez les] Tuileries [et] le Palais Royal
& replie [vous sur] ur la rue G [erm] ain des Prés
[Co] mmun
Raoul Rig [ault]

RIGAULT'S ORDER TO SHOOT THE ARCHBISHOP AND OTHERS.

on Sunday, May 21, ceased at about 4 o'clock on Sunday, the 28th. It is true that some insurgents still held the outlying fort of Vincennes; but they surrendered on being challenged to do so at 10 a.m. on Monday.

In the course of the operations 15,000 insurgents (according to MacMahon) were killed; 25,000 were taken prisoners, and the army seized 1600 pieces of artillery, and about 400,000 rifles or muskets. Owing to the outflanking tactics adopted in almost every instance throughout the week, the losses of the army were really small. The officers killed numbered 83; the wounded, 430. The men killed were 790 in number; those wounded amounting to 5994. Further, 183 men were missing.

But I must now pass to another matter, the assassination of the Archbishop of Paris and other captives. As I mentioned in my previous chapter, Gustave Chaudey was the first hostage to perish. There is evidence to show that he stoutly defended himself against the charges preferred by Raoul Rigault, but that the latter was quite determined to have him shot. In fact, when the firing-party hesitated Rigault threatened it, sword in hand. Chaudey was only wounded by the discharge, but three miscreants, a certain Clément, the prison registrar, Gentil, one of the gaolers, and an engineer named Préau de Vedel (or Wedel), who had been arrested for fraud, afterwards despatched him.

There are numerous narratives concerning the Archbishop's last days and death. According to Abbé Perny (a missionary from China), Mgr. Darboy and his companions were transferred from the prison of Mazas to that of La Roquette in a furniture van on May 22. The prelate was at this time in

very bad health indeed, and had been blistered for some complaint or other only a few hours previously. At La Roquette he occupied Cell 23 in the fourth division. M. Bonjean, an old judge of the Cour de Cassation, was lodged in Cell 1; Abbé Deguerry of the Madeleine, in No. 4; Father Clerc, a Jesuit but originally a naval officer, in No. 6; Father Ducoudray, another Jesuit, in No. 7; and Abbé Allard, an ambulance chaplain who had done good duty during the German siege, in No. 12. All of the foregoing were shot at the same time as the Archbishop. There were, however, 43 hostages in the fourth division at La Roquette, including 33 ecclesiastics, 3 police officials, Jecker, the financier, the principal of the college of Vanves, Abbé Perny (whom I here follow) and four recalcitrant National Guards. On the evening of Tuesday, the 23rd, all the ecclesiastics among the prisoners confessed and partook of the Blessed Sacrament. A number of consecrated wafers were in their possession, having reached one of them, Abbé Delmas, in a pot of butter which his mother had left for him at Mazas. It was Father Olivaint, the Superior of the Jesuits of the Rue de Sèvres, who heard Mgr. Darboy's confession and gave him absolution.

According to one account, Ferré arrived at La Roquette at about a quarter to eight o'clock on the evening of Wednesday, May 24, and then gave orders for the execution of the Archbishop and others. There exist, however, some fragments of an unstamped order signed by Raoul Rigault, a copy of which figures among the illustrations to this volume. It is quite likely that the order was issued —different orders to the same effect were issued at this moment of supreme crisis by various Communalist

leaders—but it is not certain whether Rigault's was actually the one on which the murderers acted. However that may be, Darboy and the others whom I have named, were ordered to quit their cells a little after 8 o'clock on the evening of the 24th. The Archbishop gave his arm to Judge Bonjean, Fathers Clerc and Ducoudray supported the aged Abbé Deguerry, whilst Abbé Allard walked alone. They were all led into the *chemin de ronde* within the outer walls of La Roquette and placed in a line near one of the corners. The firing-party was composed of National Guards and so-called Vengeurs de la Commune, and was commanded by a certain Virig (or Virigg), a native of Spicheren in Alsace, and captain of a company of the 180th battalion of the National Guard. Darboy tried to speak to his assassins before he died, but he was promptly silenced. All accounts agree in stating that he was the last of the prisoners to fall. Some say that he was shot at the second, and others at the third, discharge. Like his companions, he faced the firing party. There is no truth in a story to the effect that they were ordered to look towards the wall. Their bodies remained lying in the *chemin de ronde* until an early hour in the morning, when they were placed in a hand-cart and conveyed to Père-Lachaise cemetery, where a trench had been dug to receive them.

That day (May 25) Jecker, the financier, was, according to some accounts, shot by himself. At a very late hour, however, quite a number of prisoners were assembled. The selection was of a more or less arbitrary and haphazard description. Some were chosen for death, and others, like Perny, the missionary, were spared. Why that happened, I

cannot say. The party which was got together on Thursday night included, however, three Jesuit fathers, four fathers of Picpus, a curate of Notre Dame de Lorette, another Parisian priest, and a seminarist who was only twenty years old. With these ecclesiastics were two recalcitrant National Guards, three ex-police officials, and thirty-nine men who had previously served, some in the Gendarmerie, and others in the Garde de Paris. The whole party was marched in the early morning (May 26) to the Rue Haxo, jeered at and insulted on their way by a crowd of desperate, drunken, frantic folk, among whom some women were particularly conspicuous. In the Rue Haxo there were some blocks of workmen's dwellings, called the Cité de Vincennes, and in the midst of them was an enclosure, which, just before the Franco-German War, was to have been turned into a *bal champêtre*. Here the unfortunate prisoners were all shot.

A score of other hostages still remained in the fourth division at La Roquette. During the day (May 26) their doors were opened, and they were told by some of the prison officials (one account even says by Ferré himself) that they were free to depart. But a number of prisoners in the third section, including about one hundred soldiers who had refused to serve the Commune, urged them not to profit by this permission, as it might merely conceal a trap. That, however, would not seem to have been the case. Nevertheless, some of those who endeavoured to escape, including Mgrs. Surat and Bayle, both of whom were *vicaires* to Darboy, were shot by sundry Federals who happened to be in the vicinity of the prison. It is said that Surat and Bayle were pointed out to these insurgents by

Removing the Bodies of the Archbishop and other Hostages.

a woman who, although both ecclesiastics were wearing civilian garb, deemed their appearance to be suspicious, and thus brought about their death. Altogether, twenty-seven of the forty-three hostages in the fourth division of La Roquette were assassinated.

Those who were left, allied themselves with the prisoners of the third division. The captive soldiers were anxious to escape butchery. Accordingly flooring was torn up, benches were got together, and doors were stoutly barricaded. Thus the remaining prisoners at La Roquette held out until dawn on Whit-Sunday, when some Naval Infantry and some Linesmen fortunately delivered them.

Apart, however, from the hostages at La Roquette there were some thirty Christian Brothers in confinement at Mazas. Orders arrived there that they were to be put to death, but four of the prison officials stoutly opposed any such measure. One of the Brothers and some Guards were certainly killed, but that was by the explosion of a shell which fell on Mazas. The other captives were rescued by the troops. So-called "executions" took place, however, on the south side of Paris. A number of Dominicans, belonging to the school of Albert-le-Grand at Arcueil, had been removed from the fort of Bicêtre to one of the National Guard's houses of detention in the Avenue d'Italie. Thence, on May 25, they were driven into the street, by order of a certain Sérizier, and shot down. Twelve of them were killed, but a fellow-prisoner, a priest, escaped with only a bullet-hole in his cassock.

Early on Sunday the remains of the Archbishop and those of his five companions, were dug out of the trench at Père-Lachaise. Mgr. Darboy, whose

beard had grown during his captivity, was identified by his violet cassock. His body was removed to the Palais de l'Archevêché, and there it lay in state until June 7. The Rev. Mr. Ussher tells me that he witnessed this prelude to the Archbishop's obsequies. Howard Russell tried to dissuade Mr. Ussher from going, on the ground that the remains would probably be in an advanced state of decomposition, but although they had been for some days in rain-drenched ground, it had been possible to embalm them satisfactorily, and there was nothing in any way offensive about the lying-in-state. The obsequies were celebrated with great pomp and ceremony. Near the Archbishop's coffin were those of Mgr. Surat and of the murdered priests of the Madeleine, Notre Dame de Lorette, and Notre Dame de Bonne Nouvelle. The Papal Nuncio and several prelates were in attendance, and President Grévy appeared with a deputation of the National Assembly.

That, of course, was a week after the Commune's fall. On the evening of the bright Sunday when the insurrection finally collapsed, a Sunday when the streets of central Paris were crowded with returning *bourgeois*, all expressing their satisfaction that the struggle was at last over, the city's walls were placarded with a proclamation emanating from MacMahon. "Inhabitants of Paris," said he, "the Army of France has come to save you. Paris is delivered. At four o'clock our soldiers carried the last position occupied by the insurgents. To-day the struggle is over, order, work and security will now revive."

I read that announcement in the Rue de Rivoli, not far from the Hôtel-de-Ville. A moment later, however, I heard a discharge of musketry. It came

from the Lobau barracks. Several insurgents who had been taken fighting were being shot there. Others met with a similar fate in the grounds of the Luxembourg; and bodies found in the streets were hastily buried in the garden round the Tour Saint-Jacques, and on the bank of the Seine below the Quai Malaquais. I have yet something to say respecting the fate of the surviving insurgents, and of the great pecuniary losses for which the rising of the Commune was responsible. These matters I will deal with in a brief Epilogue; but, before doing so, I must mention that, all through the Week of Bloodshed and Fire, the Germans stationed at Saint-Denis and on other points, gloated over the fate befalling the once proud city of Paris. It was with ecstasy that the men who, but a few months previously, had wantonly fired scores of villages, butchered a third of the male population of Châteaudun, grossly ill-treated the hostages they had taken, and summarily shot or hanged hundreds of *francs-tireurs*, gazed at the leaping flames and listened to the deadly roar and rattle ascending from the shell and bullet-swept streets of the unfortunate capital of France.

XII.

EPILOGUE.

THE COST OF THE COMMUNE—THE FATE OF THE VANQUISHED.

IT is, of course, very difficult to form an accurate idea of the losses inflicted on France generally and the city of Paris in particular by the great insurrection which I have chronicled in these pages. Of the many private losses it is impossible to form the slightest notion. We know, however, what were the expenses incurred, on one side, by the Commune itself, and, on the other, by the Government, and also the cost of re-erecting or repairing many public and private buildings. In some other respects, moreover, it may be possible to arrive at fairly approximate figures. The following estimates appear to be probable:—

	£
Money received and expended by the Commune	2,180,000
War expenses of the Government	8,000,000
Palaces and other State edifices or monuments, repaired or lost	4,560,000*
Rebuilding of the Hôtel-de-Ville and of several district town-halls	1,440,000
Repair of churches	140,000
Repair of barracks	40,000
Rebuilding and repair of theatres	280,000
Repair of railway stations and railway lines	400,000
Rebuilding of 772 private houses totally destroyed by fire ..	3,120,000
Repair of 754 houses partially destroyed or damaged ..	1,360,000
Public and private property (exclusive of forts) destroyed throughout the western and southern suburbs	2,800,000
	£24,320,000

* Including £1,200,000 for the Tuileries, its works of art, etc. As the palace was never rebuilt, the amount was not actually expended. The work which subsequently had to be carried out cost, however, £250,000.

Many matters are of course omitted from the above list, but irrespective of commercial losses, representing perhaps twenty millions sterling, it might be possible to reach a total of thirty millions. In my estimation such a figure would not be improbable.

I now come to the fate of the insurgents, and in the first instance it should be said that, in addition to all the prisoners captured by the troops, thousands of men were afterwards denounced for having participated in the rising of the Commune. Some of the denunciations were shameful. Men who had merely served in the National Guard, and who in many instances had never actually fought—having quitted their comrades directly the army entered Paris—were denounced by jealous neighbours and forthwith conveyed to prison. Various instances of the kind came under my personal notice; and it is unpleasant to remember that, in many cases, these denunciations were deferred for long months, until, indeed, somebody conceived a grudge against somebody else, and then went to the police with some exaggerated story of what so-and-so had done during the insurrection. One was reminded of all the delation which became such a feature of Parisian life during the sway of Robespierre and his acolytes.

In order to try all the insurgent prisoners, a large number of additional *Conseils-de-guerre* or Courts-martial had to be formed. Their number was increased to six-and-twenty, the principal of which sat at Versailles, the others meeting in various parts of France whither prisoners were transferred. Moreover, culprits of certain categories (coming more particularly within the common law) were

dealt with by Assize Courts sitting in fourteen departments. By these 236 prisoners were tried, 116 of them being convicted. No Assize Court passed any death-sentence, and there were, indeed, only two sentences of hard labour for life.

The third Court-martial, which sat in the old historic Salle du Manège at Versailles, tried those members of the Commune and the Central Committee who had fallen into the hands of the authorities. This court was presided over by a wizened, bald-headed old officer, Colonel Merlin; and the prosecutions were in the hands of a very touchy, irascible and domineering Major named Gaveau. The trial of the members of the Commune and the Committee began on August 6 and did not end until September 2. The prisoners were Ferré, Lullier, Assi, Billioray, Champy, Regère, Grousset, Ferrat, Verdure, Rastoul, Jourde, Urbain, Trinquet, Courbet, Victor Clément, Ulysse Parent, and Decamps (or Descamps). Lisbonne should also have appeared before the Court at the same time, but he was still suffering from the severe wounds he had received during the street-fighting, and his trial was therefore deferred. I was in the Salle du Manège on several occasions during those long proceedings. At times they were very noisy, owing to the squabbles which arose between Gaveau, the prisoners and their counsel. The general indictment included sixteen counts, ranging from rebellion, murder, and arson to common theft. After the Court had deliberated for thirteen hours sentence was pronounced on September 2nd. Both Ferré and Lullier* were condemned to death. Assi, Billioray, Champy, Ferrat, Grousset, Regère,

* Sentence afterwards reduced to one of transportation.

and Verdure were to be deported to a fortified place. Jourde and Rastoul were sentenced to ordinary transportation. Urbain and Trinquet received sentences of hard labour for life. Courbet, on the other hand, was only sentenced to six months' imprisonment and the payment of a fine of £60. Victor Clément escaped with three months' imprisonment; and Ulysse Parent and Decamps were acquitted.

Various other trials resulted in men being sentenced to death and shot. Their names and offences were as follows:—

1. Charles Aubry. Participation in the massacre in the Rue Haxo, and (being a soldier) desertion.
2. Etienne Boudin. Incendiarism at the Tuileries.
3. Isidore Bouin (nicknamed Bobêche) assassination of the Dominicans.
4. Victor Antoine Bénot. Arson at the Tuileries, and assassination in the Rue Haxo.
5. François Beaudoin. Complicity in assassination.
6. Pierre Bourgeois (a sergeant of the Line). Desertion and armed rebellion.
7. Louis François Dalivour (a soldier). Desertion and assassination in the Rue Haxo.
8. Louis Decamp. Arson.
9. Alfred Denivelle. Complicity in assassination.
10. Henri Raoul Deschamps. Complicity in assassination.
11. Théôphile Ferré. Complicity in assassination and arson.
12. Jean-Baptiste François. Assassination in the Rue Haxo.
13. Jean Fenouillat, *alias* Philippe. Burning the church and the town-hall of Bercy.
14. Gustave Genton. Assassination of the hostages at La Roquette.
15. Armand Herpin-Lacroix. Participation in the assassination of Generals Lecomte and Clément Thomas.
16. Charles Marie Lagrange. Same crime as above.
17. Joseph Lolive. Assassination of the hostages at La Roquette.
18. Gustave Préau de Vedel. Assassination of Gustave Chaudey.
19. Louis Nathaniel Rossel, Delegate at War. Rebellion against his country.
20. Jean Pierre Rouillac. Various assassinations.
21. Émile de Saint-Omer. Assassinations in the Rue Haxo.

22. Jean-Baptiste Serizier. Assassination of the Dominicans of Arcueil.
23. Goderic Joseph Vezdagner. Assassination of Generals Lecomte and Clément Thomas.

It should be added that Gaston Crémieux was shot for his participation in the Communalist rising at Marseilles—this bringing the total number of executions by sentence of Court-martial, to twenty-four.

Great efforts were made to save Rossel, but, as I pointed out previously,* they proved unsuccessful. He, Ferré (who seemed to be quite resigned to his fate, but who expressly desired his sister to give his remains decent burial) and Pierre Bourgeois (the sergeant mentioned in the preceding list) were shot at Satory near Versailles on November 28, 1871. Some of the culprits, however, did not undergo the supreme penalty until January, 1873. That happened, notably, in the case of Bénot, the incendiary of the Tuileries.

Of thirty-nine members of the original Central Committee of the National Guard, three were sentenced to death, but reprieved. Two received sentences of hard labour for life. Eight were transported to fortified places; and three incurred sentences of ordinary transportation. Several members of the Committee, however, like several members of the Commune itself, escaped abroad, and these were sentenced by default—twelve of them to death, one to hard labour for life, eight to transportation to a fortified place, and one to a period of hard labour. Some of the ringleaders who escaped, went, in the first instance, to Belgium, but, fearing that King Leopold might hand them

* See p. 134, *ante*.

Execution of Rossel, Bourgeois and Ferré at Satory.

over to the French authorities, speedily proceeded to England. Others betook themselves to Switzerland and afterwards joined Bakunin's Anarchists. A diplomatic circular was issued by Jules Favre pointing out that, in most instances, the fugitives could not be classed as political exiles; and it is indeed certain that many men with blood-stained consciences found asylums abroad. None of them, however, even those implicated in the assassination of Archbishop Darboy, was ever surrendered to France. For some years many Communards were to be found at a notorious London café, where they alternately wrangled together or fought one another at dominoes. A few survivors, who have sobered down and become law-abiding citizens, may still be occasionally seen there.

In connection with the murder of the Archbishop, the Dominicans, the Gendarmes, and other hostages, sixteen men implicated in those crimes were sentenced to death, nine of them being shot and the remainder reprieved. Seven others received sentences of hard labour for life; eight, sentences of hard labour for various periods; eight, sentences of transportation to fortified places; fifteen, sentences of ordinary transportation; whilst fifteen others were condemned to minor penalties.

During the street-fighting and afterwards no fewer than 38,000 people were arrested for participation in the insurrection. Of these about 5000 were former soldiers who had joined the Commune either at the time of the rising of March 18 or afterwards. There were also 650 lads, none of whom was more than sixteen years of age. Further, there were 850 women. Apart from Louise Michel, however, I cannot find that more than *five* women were actually

arraigned for incendiarism. Their names would convey nothing to the reader, but it may be mentioned that one was described as a *cantinière*, one as a laundry-woman and one as a charwoman (*journalière*), whilst the remark "no profession" was entered against the others. Even allowing for the women who were shot for arson during the street-fighting, the fact that only five were afterwards indicted for that crime, confirms what I previously wrote about those grossly exaggerated stories of *pétroleuses* with which many a journalist of the period contrived to horrify his readers.

Nearly 19,000 of the people who were arrested either during the Bloody Week or afterwards were released without being called upon to stand their trial. No fewer than 11,070, however, were indicted either before the Courts-Martial or the Assize Courts, and of that number 7400 had previously "done time" for common-law offences. However, the very multitude of the cases influenced public opinion, and the matter was soon brought before the National Assembly by two of its members who had strenuously opposed the Commune. One was an old Bonapartist named Haentjens, the other an Orleanist called Batbie; and, Thiers consenting, the Legislature elected thirty of its members to form a "Commission des Graces," otherwise a Committee of Clemency. This occurred about a month after the fall of the Commune. August, however, had nearly expired when the Committee actually started on its work under the presidency of M. Martel, the interval having been spent in drawing up reports concerning the cases to be brought before it.

The Committee's labours lasted until March 8, 1876, when it resigned. It held, in all, 246 sittings, and disposed of 6501 cases which were submitted to it. In all decisions there had to be agreement between the Committee and Thiers. The sentences incurred in the cases which came before the Committee ranged from death, transportation, banishment, hard labour and police supervision to detention (in the case of lads and girls) in houses of correction. In 6403 cases the prisoners were males; in 98 they were females. Only 1709 of these prisoners had been born in Paris or its suburbs; 4598 had come to the capital from the provinces; the foreigners who appealed to the Committee numbered, all told, merely 198. This, in a way, tends to confirm what I previously wrote respecting the number of foreigners said by Taine and others to have participated in the insurrection.

Of the foregoing 6501 prisoners, 3278 were "single"; 2884 were married, 827 of that number having no children; and 339 men were described as being widowers, 124 of them being without offspring. Coming to professions, I find 4011 prisoners described as mechanics or general workmen; 906 as tradesmen, clerks, and so forth; 615 as agricultural labourers, market-gardeners, etc.; 125 as belonging to so-called "liberal" callings; 411 as being servants, house porters or portresses, etc.; 329 as having been either soldiers or sailors; and 104 as having no avocation. The Committee ascertained that 1514 individuals had previously incurred sentences for more or less serious offences; and that 595 of the "single" men lived with women to whom they were not legally married. Quite a number of other

"single" men were "bullies," who had lived on the misconduct of women.

The documents relating to many cases were examined two and three times before the Committee came to a final decision. When its labours ceased in March, 1876, it had entirely or partially remitted sentences in 3140 instances, out of the 6501 cases brought before it. Many people held that the Committee had not gone far enough; and in later years, thanks largely to the efforts of Gambetta, there were successive amnesties which released thousands of insurgents from durance or enabled those who had gone into exile to return to France. Immediately before and during the transportation of many of these men to New Caledonia, there were well-founded complaints concerning the treatment to which they were subjected. In some instances, by reason of their crimes, they deserved all they got; in many other cases, however, those of the rank and file of the insurrection, the ill-treatment was far from according with the claim of the French to be regarded as a civilized nation. A few of the men transported to Nouméa—notably a party headed by Henri Rochefort—managed to escape from that *inferno*. Rochefort had been sentenced to confinement in a fortified place. Many efforts were made to prevent his removal from France, but Thiers could not forget or forgive the destruction of his house and the consequent loss of his works of art. It is, however, I think, true that he employed his influence to prevent the death-sentence from being passed on the pamphleteer of *La Lanterne*. Whilst Rochefort was detained at Versailles he married *in extremis*, at the hospital there, a young women with whom he had previously been living

and who was then nigh her death. She was reputed to be the mother of Rochefort's two sons, one of whom, I believe, is still alive and (like his grandfather) a fervent believer in royalty. There is an old story, for which I cannot vouch, to the effect that the young woman who died at the Versailles hospital had never really been a mother, but asserted that her lover's sons by another person were her own. In later years it was often difficult to tell who was Mme. Rochefort and who was not. I know of two authentic marriages, but several other women were introduced to me as Rochefort's wives. Among them I remember there was an irascible young creature who one evening when I was dining at Rochefort's (Ollivier Pain and others being present) picked a violent quarrel with her lord and master, and after pulling a valuable little painting from its place on the wall, banged it down upon the dining-table, smashing the glass and crockery there, and entirely spoiling our repast. We fled whilst the "great man" humbled himself before the lady, who exacted expensive terms of peace.

I have come now to the end of this long chronicle, which, in part, exemplifies what may happen when a conflict arises between two parties and neither will listen to the voice of "sweet reasonableness" and concede anything to the other. As I have already pointed out more than once, there were faults on the side of Thiers and the National Assembly as well as on that of the Commune. But if I have to give a verdict in the case it must be against the insurrection. One may condone the action of the Socialists, the idealists, who participated in it. But they were mastered, supplanted by the Jacobin element; even as the latter supplanted the Girondins.

of the first Revolution. Paris then became once more a veritable hell upon earth, given over to "sword and fire, red ruin and the breaking-up of laws."

Now war is on us again, "Loud war by land and by sea, war with a thousand battles," and endangering more than one throne. It cannot, however, have, in Paris and France, any such aftermath as that which followed the war of 1870–71. All France is nowadays absolutely united, and everything has so changed that the Communalist idea is utterly dead. I add these few lines to this book soon after the general expectation of a German advance upon Paris. It has been frustrated, and more will be known long before these pages can issue from the press. But even should the Germans ever again reach Paris, even should they carry the city by storm—to invest it, would, I think, now be impossible—France will not be *hors-de-combat* as she was when Paris fell forty-four years ago. Fortune has certainly not favoured the French in the early part of the present campaign. In one respect there has been a repetition of what formerly occurred. The great numerical superiority of the Germans has asserted itself in spite of the utmost skill and valour on the part of the French troops. This was to be foreseen; I myself wrote in the preface to "My Days of Adventure," published several months before the present war arose, that I feared France could not hope to contend with Germany unless she were supported by most powerful allies. She has barely forty million people, whereas Germany numbers sixty-six millions. Yet in 1870 the population of the two countries was approximately equal. With my keen sympathies for France, it

distresses me to have to write one unkind word about her. But the truth must be told. If she is now in difficulties it is because for long years her married people have failed to do their duty, because neither monsieur nor madame has cared to incur the expense and worry of rearing children. Had France so chosen, her population might nowadays be as great as that of Germany and her fighting force equal in number to her enemy's. She is paying a hard price for her disregard of all the exhortations of many of her leading men. I can only trust that, after her present trials, she will come to a saner conception of the duties of life. Otherwise she cannot be certain of the future. When a nation deliberately settles down to racial suicide there is no alliance in the world that can save her.

We ourselves, however, are not blameless. Had our people listened to Lord Roberts and those who supported his views, we should now have had hundreds of thousands of young men partially trained for military duty, whereas most of those who have lately flocked to the colours must be trained from the very beginning, and cannot possibly come into line as soon as would, otherwise, have been the case. That is a lesson we ought never to forget.

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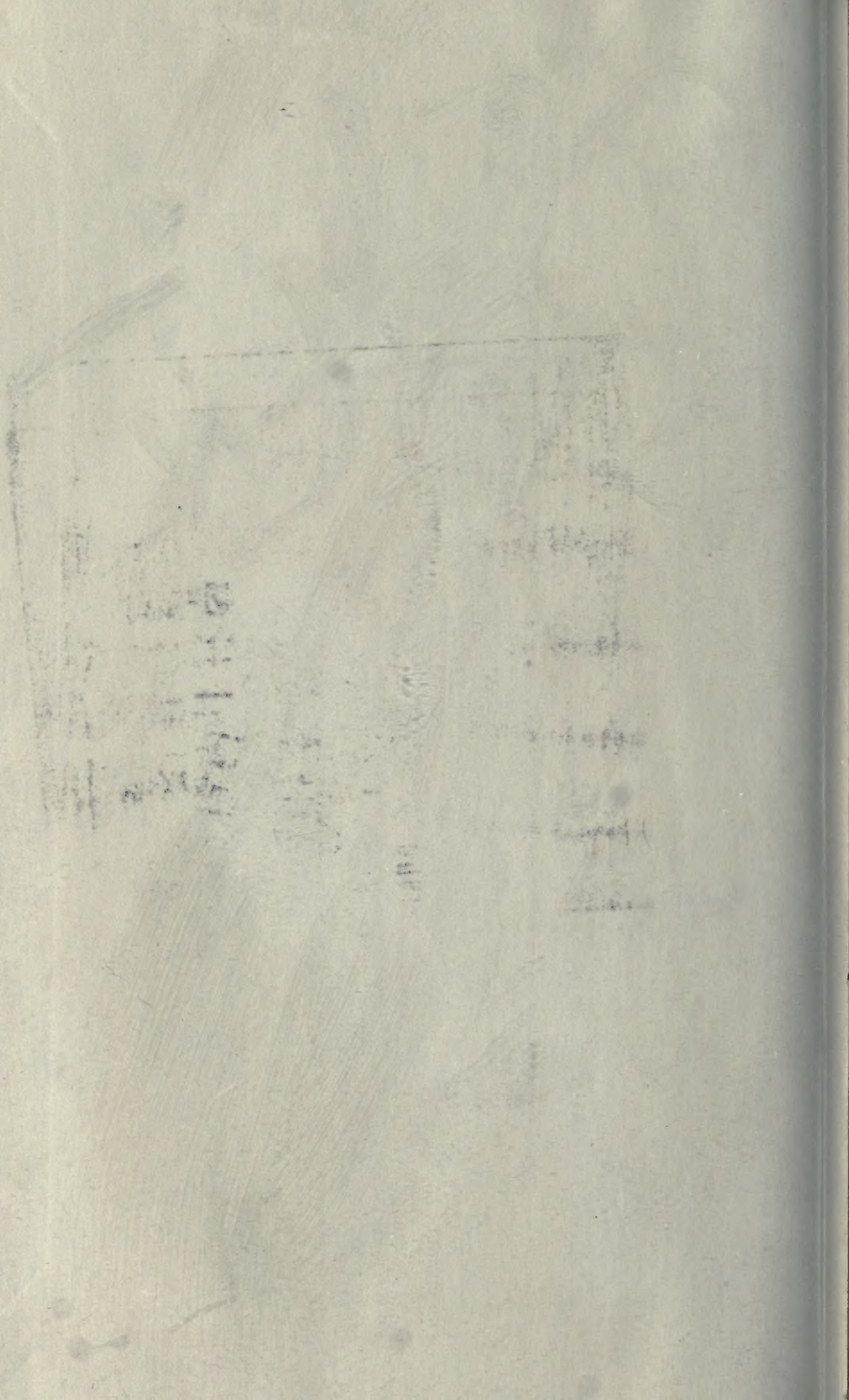

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